The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

Ralph Douglas Hyslop:

The Gift and Growth of Unity

Randolph C. Miller	•	Education of Christians
Robert L. Schlager	•	Disorderly Saints
James E. Dittes	•	'Now It Came to Pass'
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In this Issue —

RALPH DOUGLAS HYSLOP's contribution on page 4 was his inaugural address at Union Theological Seminary in New York last October, delivered when he became professor of ecumenical studies and associate director of the program of advanced religious studies. Beginning next July, he will be director of the program. Last year Dr. Hyslop worked with the World Council in Geneva during a sabbatical leave from the faculty of the Pacific School of Religion, which he joined in 1947 after four years as minister for student life in the Christian education division of the Congregational Christian Board of Home Missions.

RANDOLPH CRUMP MILLER, professor of Christian education at Yale Divinity School, has served his chosen field in a variety of ways: as philosophy of religion professor at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific; as chaplain of Episcopal students at the University of California; as visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School and Episcopal Theological School; as rector and director of education of Episcopal parishes; as member of his denomination's Curriculum Construction Division; and as author and editor of a dozen books. His latest, *Education for Christian Living,* was published in April by Prentice-Hall, while his *Biblical Theology and Christian Education* will be brought out in the fall by Scribners.

ROBERT L. SCHLAGER has served for more than a decade as pastor of the First Methodist of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Founded in 1836, "The American Church"—oldest Methodist church and probably the oldest Protestant church on the continent—is a base for mission activity in Latin America. Mr. Schlager studied at the University of Illinois, Culver-Stockton College and the Pacific School of Religion.

JAMES E. DITTES is an assistant instructor in the psychology of religion at Yale Divinity School where he is working on his Ph.D. dissertation. His studies at Yale, following graduation from Oberlin College, were interrupted in 1950 by a two-year appointment as teacher, with his wife, at the American School in Talas, Turkey. An ordained Baptist minister, he was an assistant pastor in Lakewood, Ohio, at the time he preached the sermon in this issue.

DAVID G. BUTTRICK is in his fifth year as the minister of First Presbyterian Church, Fredonia, N.Y. The son of Dr. George Buttrick, he was educated at Haverford College and at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

E. JERRY WALKER, minister of St. James Methodist Church on Chicago's south side, used the Antioch story as his sermon theme on the Sunday, late in 1954, when his congregation received into fellowship its first class of members to include Negroes. Historic St. James thus became Methodism's first full-fledged interracial congregation.

LOWELL M. ATKINSON is minister of First Methodist Church in Englewood, N.J., the sixth church he has served in Newark and Baltimore conferences. Dr. Atkinson, who holds both bachelor and graduate degrees from Drew University, is a frequent contributor to religious publications and an active participant in affairs of his conference .

WINBURN T. THOMAS made his report of the Australian meeting of the World Council in a sermon preached Feb. 25 to his congregation in St. Paul's Church in Djakarta, Indonesia. There he is field representative for the American mission boards cooperating in the National Council of Church's Division of Foreign Missions.

HERBERT BEECHER HUDNUT since 1940 has been the minister of Woodward Avenue Presbyterian Church in Detroit. Both in that city and in Pittsburgh, where he was a pastor for eight years, he has been active in civic programs as well as in the affairs of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

LUCILLE M. WORSTER, whose children's sermon was published last month, and her husband, Raymond G. Worster, have left Toledo to serve the Leydon Congregational Church in Brookline, Mass.

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Memo:

THERE is a trick, you know, to making a page like this turn out just right. There must be just enough letters and spaces in each line, and just enough lines to fill the page. So it often comes to pass that a line or lines must be cut from my copy to make it fit. Very rarely —for I do run on—a line or lines must be added. If this editor could only meet his own deadline, of course, he could add or subtract lines in the proofs which would get back to the editorial offices in plenty of time for him to do his own tinkering. But the way things have been working out around here, the Memo is written the day Mrs. Booker takes all the proofs back to the plant and feeds them into the press. This means that my Girl Friday becomes my Lady Procrustes, editing me on the spot, lopping here, yanking there, to make the Memo fit.

Last month an extra line had to be added at the plant. That line is the text for this month's reflections. For in adding a clause to amplify my earlier remarks, my colleague had me say that it is hard for us preachers, when we are in a congregation, to be fair to the preacher up front, "whom we came to hear."

It was that "*whom we came to hear*" that jumped off the page at me while I was sneaking a private reading of the Memo as soon as the printed magazines got to us (private, because the cynics around here call it "Gill reading his favorite author" if they catch me at it). At first I was perfectly sure that I couldn't have written that. I might have thought it, but everything we have been taught in this worship-centered generation would inhibit my saying it.

The important thing about the Sunday morning service, say the I-Thou theologians, is our encounter with God in our encounter with each other. The preacher is not insignificant: his sermon may figure in the encounter. But he and his sermons are not so determinative that one is justified in changing churches because of a preacher's personality or homiletics.

The theologians of the Church make the same point. The important thing about worship is its provision for the participation of the whole congregation in the Body of Christ. The high liturgists in this group de-emphasize the pulpit and re-emphasize the altar. The low levelers de-emphasize the pulpit's initiative and re-emphasize the pew's response.

The ecclesiastical engineers enter here, too. To keep local churches stable and pulling their weight, loyalties must be encouraged to the particular parish. No matter how incompetent the preaching, the layman is not to stray to sit below other pulpits. And the homiletician, faithful child of his era, tells his students that congregations are not the audiences they once were thought to be, that the sermon therefore is not all that it once was thought to be, and that the ideal is the homogenized service with no part advertised above the others.

The upshot of all of which is that no sophisticated preacher today would be caught dead saying of any preacher that it was he "whom we came to hear."

When you come right down to it, though, shouldn't a Protestant Christian be able to say that? For Protestantism is that branch of Christianity which insists that it was no accident that Jesus Christ was called not the picture or the smell or the taste or the tune of God—but the Word of God. His revelation was in a life and a death, but it comes to us as a life and death reported, verbalized, interpreted. It is this verbal reporting, interpreting, applying which still gives the sense and meaning to all Protestant worship. It is words in the service of the Word which still mediate God's revelation of himself in Christ. The words are not just in the sermon, of course, but in the sermon all the words of prayers, hymns, liturgy and scripture are concentrated and culminated—or contradicted.

Yes, the Protestant can go past one preacher to hear another. Yes, he can sermon-taste. In full faithfulness to the Church of Christ he may even depart his ancestral chapel to worship with a minister whose preaching is more faithful to the biblical word, who is more careful with the word of truth. Incredible as it seems to the Protestant preacher, recalling all too often the haphazard genesis of his own sermons, our preaching is one of the marks of the true church. When it is faithful, where it gets through, there the church is. There people *should* come. Where a minister takes his preaching with less than ultimate seriousness, there the church has probably left even ahead of the congregation.

Yes, we can say of a preacher that it is he "whom we came to hear," though to say so puts a terrible responsibility on every minister. It elevates pulpit over plant and program, clinic and calling. When we are reluctant to admit that, might it be that we are not just shaking off old attitudes, but are shuddering off an original obligation?

T. A. G.

Ancient Promise and Commission

For Pentecost 1956

THE GIFT AND

WE who are the fruit of Pentecost continued in the history of the church are accustomed to saying that our unity is not our achievement but God's gift. Surely this is true, but just as surely it is partial truth and the more dangerous because it is incomplete.

The unity of the followers of Christ is a gift, but it is a gift accompanied by a commission. Those who are able to talk with the conviction of experience of the triumphs of God are those who also declare to all men that "the promise is meant for you and for your children." To claim fellowship with God is to bear the divine constraint to declare him and his power to all mankind. No form of Christian unity is authentic which does not fill to overflowing with the vitality of the Christian witness. It is that very overflowing which is the sure sign to men that God is active and that we are bound unto his holy and imperious will.

There should be little need for warning concerning the peril of claiming divine gifts without full commitment to divine commission. Biblical thought is shot through with this terrible warning that the true God is a jealous God in a sense which places a premium upon man's humility and contrition. He will have no other gods before him, not even the god we claim as surety of our faith and its unity. For if we claim him and are not wholly claimed by his cause, we serve not him but our claim upon him and our satisfaction and security in it.

Living Commitment

That this peril confronts the contemporary movement toward a more visible realization of our unity no sober observer could deny. The ecumenical movement was born in the expansion of the Christian mission. It was nurtured by the faith and dedication of those who prayed with the Master that all might be one in order that the world should believe in him and in the God who sent him. The validity of the movement rests in the extent to which the right and responsibility of Christian evangelism is established throughout the Christian community as first among the tasks of the church.

Unity does not consist in private or corporate nurture of special tokens of divine favor. These tokens are manifold and varied, but all alike are barren when conceived as possessions to be cherished rather than powers to be conferred.

Nor does unity live and grow in debate, however learned, concerning the historic or contemporary formulations of Christian doctrine. The noblest of the creeds are confessions drawn from the living commitment of men who knew themselves to be the ministers, not the masters, of the divine Grace. Who can read the writings of Athanasius or follow the career of this oft-banished bishop without realizing that the greatest of the Nicene defenders labored solely that the power of the one God and his redeeming Son might be known in its fullness to all who were yet far off? It is to declare the mystery and majesty of God's action in history that we form our testimonies, certain that they must fail to express, as they will by the divine providence fail to limit, his freedom and our dependence.

Ecumenical Heresy

Christian unity does not consist even in ecumenical studies. There is exhibited here the danger of a new heresy in Christianity: the ecumenical heresy. Like all heresies, this one is an exaggeration of part of the truth at the expense of the whole. It is certainly true that an understanding of the variety and validity of the forms and traditions of historic Christian churches may serve to moderate our tendency to claim divine sanction for one alone. It would surely be loss, not gain, however, if this moderation were to find expression in a suave and confident relativism by means of which we offer our better understanding of each other as substitute for a humbling and painful awareness of a common failure to know the will of God. No mighty force moves through the world solely because the churches naming Christ as God and Savior come to know each other better. It is not even clear that the issuing of this better understanding in organic union of churches is proof that the power of the gospel here becomes visible to men. We dare not, I think, interpret the divine gift of unity as entailing only that form of accord which results from mutual acceptance of historic orders and administrations of divided Christendom. The ecumenical heresy may well be the conviction that the reunion of the church is the supreme good in the very moment in history when the supreme need is for its rebirth. The most tempting aspect of this heresy is the suggestion that the two are the same. They are not.

For the gift of unity is God's gift of Christ as Savior of the world. As he is for all men, so all who acknowledge him as Lord and proclaim him as Savior are for all men: committed to all, bound in

By Ralph Douglas Hyslop

GROWTH OF UNITY

service to all. The growth of unity is not a plan nor an achievement of the churches. As he who created the church remains, through his indwelling of it, the church's only Lord, so the oneness of his people is and remains the manifestation of his Lordship. They are one with us who are one with him, and he is, by divine act, made one with all mankind.

The tokens of his saving work in and through the church in our world are more than sufficient signs of our true unity. It is our peril, and the world's, that we seek to limit or to control this work which is the constant source and invigoration of our common life. With humility and discretion we may indeed seek to apply those tests of the Spirit which Paul derived from his oneness with the living Christ.

Those who speak with tongues must prove that their speaking edifies and empowers the whole congregation of Christ. This includes theologians who expound the truths of the End as well as ecstatic groups who proclaim the beginning of a new life. Those who find in historic liturgy and classic creed the channels of God's love and grace must demonstrate that these channels are open to all men, as the gift of God is to all men. Those who cherish their liberties must yield them in allegiance to him whose authority alone establishes and maintains our freedom to be and to believe. Those who love and serve the movement for Christian unity must surrender that movement and its power and prestige to a greater Lord than that conceived by any institution in history, even the institution of the church.

Ecumenical Movement

Our God gave us to be one with his Son who died for us, not only that we might recognize each other as brothers but that in union with our Master we might know him who sent Christ into the world. We do not, in fact, know each other rightly unless we know that we are those for whom Christ died, dwelling among men, for whom he also died, who knew him not. The promise of our unity is not fulfilled in us but through us in those to whom we minister in Christ's name.

Here is the life and hope of the ecumenical movement. All who live and work in this fellowship accept the commission to preach the gospel to all mankind. It is the power of Christ in each of our lives which alone provides the signs by which we recognize each other and acknowledge a single devotion: through prayer and study, through corporate life and searching criticism of our ways and forms, in mutual dependence and in grateful fellowship with Christ our King, we grow in unity.

We testify not to a new power or wisdom but to the ancient promise fulfilled in our time. In the first descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church "fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." So it may be when the power of God breaks through into the life of man. There is awe, for this could not be expected according to all that we know or think. There are wonders and signs because this is God's work in us and he is able to do all things, even to create and to conserve that unity which enables the Christian fellowship to be in the world as Christ is in the world, to suffer, to serve and to save not itself but mankind.

Ascensiontide

By Siegmund A. E. Betz

WE were unready for that day,
And shuddered at henceforth lonely apostleship
And the rebuke to our loving gaze into heaven,
We men of Galilee.

We had walked in His way
Till it came to this mountain at last,
Till the cloud took Him; and we were left cloddish, pedestrian
By this sudden verticality.

We shuddered at awesome tasks to come: the dismay
Of the newly responsible, the evangelist's drudgery of speech,
The sheer labor of loving, the brotherhood day by day knit or riven,
Our feeble temporizing and our dim finality.

We were unready on that day and waited a decade of days,
Since readiness is of God and yet in time.
Then Eternal Purpose caught time and us in its flame—
So it was the Spirit came.

Sermon for the Festival of the Christian Hom

The Education of Christians

By Randolph Crump Miller

The beginning of wisdom is reverence for the Lord. Psalms 111:10 (Goodspeed).

"When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the significance of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?' you must say to your son, 'When we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, the Lord brought us out of Egypt by a strong hand." Deuteronomy 6:20-21 (Goodspeed).

From childhood you have known the Scriptures which can give you the wisdom that through faith in Christ Jesus leads to salvation. II Timothy 3:15 (Goodspeed).

I

IF the beginning of wisdom is reverence for the Lord, how can we teach it? Can you learn reverence from a book? Do you become reverent by being told that God is full of majesty and glory? Will hurricanes and floods and earthquakes teach you to stand in awe before God's terrible power? Or do small children become reverent by wiggling through long worship services that are meaningless to them?

Reverence is something that is caught rather than taught. It may dawn upon a child to be reverent because of the way "grace" is said at table. Another child may learn it from the way his mother cares for the flowers in the garden. But chiefly we learn reverence for the Lord because members of the family show concern for all the other members.

"No man has seen God at any time," and we know God as Spirit because we see what he has done. When I have been forgiven, when my loneliness is overcome, when my relationships with other persons are stable and healthy and strong, when I receive love that I do not deserve—then I am thankful in my reverence.

When I find the strength to go on, in spite of difficulties and temptations, when I am given the power to be patient and tolerant, when I learn to accept limitations and to adjust to my situation, when I find strength to forgive and to ask foregiveness—then I find reverence welling up within me.

Such experiences as these point beyond myself and beyond other people. Jesus Christ said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Whenever I treat you as a child of God for whom Christ died, God is with us. Whenever I break my relationship with you, I cause both of us to become separated from God. "No man has ever seen God; if we love on another, God abides in us and his love is perfecte in us."

II

When a child grows up in an atmosphere of reve ence, "in time to come" he will ask what it is a about. It doesn't help to answer his questions befor he asks them, for he cannot hear the answer unles the question is real.

At first, his questions are very elementary, bu he is seeking for *the meaning of his existence*, an how he is answered is of extreme importance. Thi is God's world, and the child's reverence depend on what God does in this world.

"In time to come," he will ask about creation about God's covenant with Moses and with th people of Israel, about God's new covenant through the suffering and resurrection of Christ, and abou the work of the church. But as he asks questions h will come to *doubt*, for only as he works out his own answers will his faith be his own.

Teachers and parents are very important at thi point, for only as youngsters are free to expres their doubts and seek answers to meet their needs does education take place. We provide sources o information, historical knowledge, acquaintance with the traditions and lore of the church, and whatever else children need for guidance. We *hope* that they will come to share our faith, but we dare not impose it upon them!

Adults learn in the same way. A parents' class comes upon new questions that suddenly become significant, the members contribute their questions and problems as well as the answers that have been helpful so far, and then as a group they seek for the relevance of the gospel for their present decisions. Revelation comes to them as they face the meaning of the events in their own lives with the resources of the Christian heritage.

But how can we be sure that in time to come anyone will ask the *right* questions? One of the reasons people do not listen to the church is that it is answering questions no one is asking. What people *want* is not always what they *need*. If you give a child a nickel, he is almost sure to buy candy or bubble-gum. If you ask a man what he wants out of life, he will answer in terms of happiness, security and material possessions. Many people do not ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?" and

erefore are not really interested in the answer. It takes skillful teaching to lead a person from his *nts* to his *needs*. The knowledge that we are sepated from God, and that our relationships need to healed, does not come easily in an unhappy and ustrated age. Yet Christian education is built on e conviction that a God of love restores us to llowship with him and with our fellows when we rn to him in faith.

III

"Remember from what sort of people your knowlge has come, and how from early childhood your ind has been familiar with the holy Scriptures, hich can open the mind to the salvation which mes through believing in Christ Jesus [II Timhy 3:15, Phillips]." How does the Bible fit into is scheme of Christian education?

The proper use of Scripture may lead us to a under Christian education by making us ready ask the right questions, by preparing us to seek e Lord while he may be found, and by incorpoting us into the blessed community of the faithful.

First, we discover that we are like many of the aracters portrayed in Scripture. We share the urderous anger of Moses as well as his service rough the Law. We have the same adulterous oughts as David, without the power to carry them rough, and yet we also have something of his enitence and courage. We flame with the indignaon of an Amos or a Jeremiah, and yet we are satfied with the empty ceremonial of the priests. We nd ourselves popping up in the parsimony of Anaias and Sapphira, who held back some of their onation to the church. We are disturbed by the ch young ruler who could not give his money to e poor. We are so much like the respectable harisees that we cannot understand why Jesus alled them such nasty names. Yet we rejoice when esus threw the money-changers out of the Temple.

Beginning therefore to see our own condition as e find ourselves separated from God and our felws, we wonder if we need to be saved, and this ads us into the questions we need to ask.

Second, the characters of the Bible did not disover how to meet their needs until they sought their ord. Judas and Peter both denied Christ in their wn ways, but Judas was destroyed because his etrayal was final and not repented of, and Peter as saved because he repented of his denial. Judas ay have been endowed with more brains than eter, but Peter with his big heart somehow blunered through until he found the answer.

When we are confronted with the real meaning of e Scriptures we find that we also face the same uestion that Judas and Peter faced: "*Is Jesus our Christ?*" Judas denied it and Peter accepted . Thomas doubted it until he had proof and then e cried out, "My Lord and my God!"

Well, where do you stand? Are you sure? If you re *too sure* that you are right, then you share in e pride of the Pharisees that Jesus so rightly conemned. If you don't know, you stand with Thomas the corner of doubt, and if you stand there peranently your faith will be paralyzed.

Third, when we examine the Scriptures from our youth up, we discover one other factor: *The Bible is the church's book.* The church appears in the story the Bible tells as the community of the Holy Spirit. These men and women of the Bible, so much like us in every way, found in the fellowship of the church the strength to become and remain loyal followers of Jesus Christ. By God's grace they became new persons, transformed and reborn from above. The lost were found, the lonely were restored to fellowship, and sinners were redeemed. They discovered that God loved them, no matter how unlovely they were, and because God loved them they could be saved.

They responded to this love with heroic living. They witnessed to their faith; they died as martyrs; they went to the uttermost parts of the earth as missionaries; and they lived with each other so that observers said, "Behold how these Christians love one another!"

IV

We learn about the Christian faith by sharing in the reverence for the Lord whom we find in our homes and in the church. As we grow older, we ask questions, we doubt the answers that are given, and we work through to the answers that God makes real to us. As we face the Scriptures, we discover that we cannot save ourselves and that we are very much like all the other sinners in the world. Within the fellowship of the church, we find channels of grace by which God strengthens us and empowers us to do his will.

We come into faith as we discover that God loves us no matter how unlovely we are. We accept the fact that we are accepted as we are by God, and therefore we are enabled to become what we ought to be. Then it may be said of us that we "increased in wisdom and in years, and in favor with God and man."

So we pray,

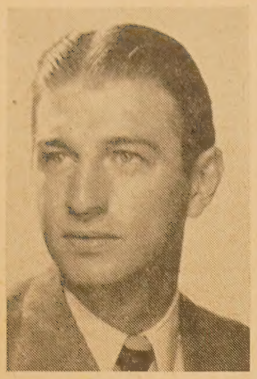
God of grace and God of glory . . .
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
For the living of these days.

Invocation

By Alvin D. Johnson

First Baptist, Middletown, Connecticut

OUR Father, for Thy goodness and mercy which never faileth, we come humbly and hopefully to thank Thee. Gratefully we have heard the still, small voice and in response we now come for renewal and spiritual refreshment. We ask Thy blessing upon this service, upon all who have come in expectation of a transforming communion with Thee. Our needs are known to Thee; may we in confidence open our lives to receive that promised blessing which is beyond our dreams or our deserts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Drunk and Disorderly Saints

By Robert L. Schlager

And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." Acts 2:12.

WHITSUNDAY, otherwise known as the day of Pentecost, is the birthday of the church—the day when the church celebrates the occasion of the Holy Spirit descending upon the gathered saints and apostles at Jerusalem. As with all birthday occasions, it happens that those not participating in the celebration misinterpret the spirit of the moment. Nowhere is this very human error of misinterpretation more clearly demonstrated than in this account of what happened at Pentecost. Those involved in the birthday celebration report that, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." But those not a part of the gathered saints and apostles reported that they were amazed and perplexed, "Saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine.' "

It should be noted that the apostle Peter quickly rose to the defense, saying that it was impossible that these people should be drunk for it was only nine o'clock in the morning. But the inescapable conclusion remains that those who were not members of the First Church of Jerusalem felt that the saints were drunk.

I suppose that in these days of churchly respectability some of us are a bit embarrassed that the saints should have acted so unseemly and boisterous on this most auspicious occasion. We feel it to be in bad taste that the people should become so enthusiastic about their religion. It is interesting to me that whenever people become enthusiastic about their religion they are likely to be accused of going overboard—of becoming fanatics. John Wesley once preached a sermon on this subject in which he said:

> . . . It is true, there is a sort of religion, nay, and it is called Christianity too, which may be practiced without any such imputation, which is generally allowed to be consistent with common sense . . . that is, a religion of form, a round of outward duties, performed in a decent, regular manner. You may add orthodoxy thereto, a system of right opinions, yes, and some quantity of heathen morality; and yet not many will pronounce, that "much religion hath made you mad." But if you aim at the religion of the heart, if you talk of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," then it will not be long before your sentence is passed, "Thou art beside thyself."

Perhaps some of you have heard Halford Luccock tell the story of his friend on the New York police force. One day as they were talking on the streets the police officer turned to Dr. Luccock and asked him what the letters D.D. meant when written after the name of a minister. Dr. Luccock told him that they meant Doctor of Divinity. Immediately the officer exclaimed, "Do you know that D.D. is the most common charge written upon the police blotter? It means drunk and disorderly!" Dr. Luccock hastened to assure the friend that it was a coincidental relationship, but on the way home that evening he began to think about the incident again. Was this not the accusation put upon the saints at Pentecost? Have we now become so respectable that no one of us can ever be accused of becoming intoxicated with the Holy Spirit?

It is my contention in this sermon that today within the life of the church the Holy Spirit is quite as important as it was at Pentecost. Moreover, the enthusiasm which overcame the saints at Jerusalem is quite as necessary in our personal lives if we are ever to know anything of what Wesley termed "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." What then is the significance of the Holy Spirit for us now?

'Of One Accord'

In the first place, it is the *source of the unity of the church.* Acts 2:1 tells us, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." I prefer the King James rendering at this point because it so clearly foretells what is made explicit in the narrative that follows. It says, "And they were all of one accord in one place." I suppose the cynic might remark at this point that this is one of the few times in the history of the church that the members of any congregation were all in agreement with one another. Yet there is a deep Christian truth for us here. When we are trying to run the church according to our own desires we inevitably run into dissent and bickering. Mrs. Jones becomes upset because her child has not received the attention she deserves. Perhaps Mr. Green wants a position of leadership that is already occupied by someone else. Miss Brown may be unhappy about the way the choir is being run. It is even possible that someone else has quit the church because he feels it has recently been redecorated in bad taste. Oh yes, we may smile, but I have seen churches split on just such petty matters.

We might lift our sights a bit and notice how this works among the churches. We have engaged in great quarrels over how we should baptize, how we should govern a church, how we should ordain our ministry and other such matters. Now maybe the majority of you are not too exercised over these

uestions, but I can assure you that there are many rominent churchmen who can be whipped into an cclesiastical tizzy over just these matters.

The point I wish to make is that whenever the nity of our churches depends upon our own desires nd devices we are bound to bicker. When this is one the church is but little different from a club, a dge or a veterans' organization. Let us face the icts! You do not belong to this church because we ave such wonderful people here. You know that the eople on the outside of our fellowship frequently all us hypocrites. And in a very real sense they are ght!

But what the people on the outside of our fellowip do not realize is that we are called into a unity ot of our own making. We are gathered here beause something has happened to us that we cannot scape. We are gathered here because in some way ne voice of God has spoken to us and put within ur hearts a desire for "love, joy, peace, gentleness nd goodness." We know ourselves to be hypocrites t that we can never live up to the high demands of ur calling in Christ Jesus. But more than this we now ourselves to be the recipients of his loving forveness and grace that has come to us through the oly Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit the saints and apostles ere a frightened and divided group. With the Holy pirit they were unified into a cohesive and dyamic fellowship that went out to overcome the orld. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit in ur congregation we can fight among ourselves and icker over the little things that seem important to s. But if we are ever overwhelmed by the powerful rces that to the early Christians seemed like a shing wind and tongues of fire, then there is no mit to what God can do with this gathered group saints.

Do we obey the unveiling of God's conscience in hrist? Do we believe in the Holy Spirit—in God resent and active within us, supplementing our eakness, enlightening our ignorance, molding our ills, keeping us in unity with lovers of Christ verywhere, and equipping us with every grace and ft we need to make our world Christian, if we let im? Are we merely God-seekers, or are we God-ossessed, God-led, God-empowered?

Source of Strength

The second thing that we can say about the sigficance of the Holy Spirit is that it is our power, ur joy and our confidence.

At the heart of all genuine religion there must alays be a great enthusiasm. I do not think it wise hat we should attempt to speak in tongues and try erally to reproduce the pentecostal situation in ur time. Indeed St. Paul chastened the church at orinth for indulging in this sort of thing. But is ot the real problem of our day just the opposite? 'e have no great enthusiasms or causes for which e would die. Too many of us can hear no wind of ne Spirit blowing, see no tongue as of flame upon nybody's head. If we had been at Jerusalem for entecost, many of us would have seen and heard -nothing.

If we know anything of the life of the early Christian church we know that it was enthusiastic. Listen to some of the passages from the book of Acts: "With gladness and singleness of heart praising God"; "Boldness and great power of their witness"; "Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer"; "Stephen, full of grace and power," whose "face was like the face of an angel." But listen to these passages from Paul when he speaks of "the joy of the Holy Spirit": "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice," or "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials."

Johannes Weiss has written that unless one understands the early Christians' "mood of victorious, jubilant happiness and confidence," one cannot understand the primitive church. Relying upon God, this group of courageous, inspired men became "a new people, with a future," while all about them was the gloom and hopelessness of a "nation moving on to destruction."

Whence came this confidence, this audacious certainty, which lifted men above the drab monotony of every day and gave them a feeling of good fortune and assurance—whence came it to these poor, socially submerged, politically uninfluential men, who impressed the leaders of the people as "unlearned and ignorant"? Those nearest the situation had but one answer: It was the Spirit of God which had come upon the community, it was God himself who gave his servants courage "to speak thy word with all boldness." God had shed his love abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

For Us, Too

Does all this kind of talk seem strange to us in our day of sophistication? Does it seem supernatural and rather weird? Can it be that this kind of experience was for yesteryears and not for us? When an athlete becomes inspired and with only seconds to go takes the football and runs as he has never run before in his life to score the winning touchdown, what do we say? Perhaps he is so carried away by the occasion that he has performed "'way over his head." Does this seem impossible to us? No, it does not; we rather expect such feats.

But what if something could come to your life to give it meaning, to give it power, joy and confidence? Is this impossible? I tell you it is not. There is something that comes from above that the church has called the Holy Spirit. For centuries it has made strong men out of weak men, dynamic men out of dull men, and given the saints the courage and joy that has overcome the world. Keep your eyes open and tongues like flame, purifying and enlightening, will appear to you on many a head and glorify it with the image of God. Listen, for the wind of the Spirit blows through this old world now as always. And when you see it, and when you hear it, then do not be silly and say like the bystanders at Pentecost that they are drunk, but say with Peter, for that is the truth, "This is what was spoken by the prophet . . . 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.' " Keep your eyes open; for to all who can see and hear and understand, the Day of Pentecost is for you, too!

One Today Is Worth Two Tomorrows

'Now It Came to Pass That . . .'

By James E. Dittes

"The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Luke 17:20, 21.

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Romans 8:9.

IN the American Standard Revision, one simple word punctuates the Gospel accounts like the steady, throbbing beat of a bass drum. "Now" is the word, and it introduces event after event as a kind of warning. It says, "Here, take notice, something important is going on right now." From the beginning—"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus . . ." —to the climax—"Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn . . ."—this little word emphasizes the immediate vital importance of the events that are being described.

In the Old Testament, and the New, things happen. People move around the Bible and get things done, decisively. This is part of the attraction and challenge which the Scriptures hold for us. We do not read, for example, that the disciples "talked about sending a special mission to the villages and formed a committee to study the situation." Instead, we read, wistfully, "Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them . . ."; and they "returned with joy . . ."

Frustrating Record

The record of the Bible events is clear-cut: "Now it came to pass that . . ." The record of our lives more often is: "Now it was about to come to pass that . . ." Or, "It will come to pass just as soon as . . ." Always there is one last obstacle to be cleared up before we settle down to the intended project. The conditions are quite suitable at the moment, but just as soon as . . . As soon as we start our diets or get our letters written; always next week. In raising a family we know exactly the kin of intimate relationship of love and affection we e pect to establish with the child, just as soon as h gets out of this present stage.

So with all the high resolves of our lives, th plans to make or break habits, the determination establish in our lives the closer fellowship with Go for which we long. It is about to come to pass. S with the noble and sincere promises of political can didates: "Give us just one more year to make goo our pledges, when certain conditions will be im proved." So with the ideals of a national foreig policy. Statements and speeches profess the Unite Nations as the only hope for solution of world crisi But too often when such a crisis does come th U.N. organization is deemed unsuited to handl it, for just this particular time. In general, yes; *nou* no. It's about to come to pass. This is the haunt ing, frustrating record of our lives—it's about t come to pass—as we measure them against th Scripture's "Now it came to pass that . . ."

Inevitable Consequences

We discover, or we should, that it is in the Now— in the immediate set of circumstances imperfect a they are—that we have to establish our aims. Wha we put into the Now comes to pass. What we plan for tomorrow seldom does; for tomorrow, as w imagine it, seldom comes. The batter planning t hit a home run just as soon as he gets the righ pitch doesn't have these home runs in the record books. All that counts is what he does with the ball that really are pitched to him. The young writer and artists who wait for just the "right inspiration" before sitting down to work don't get works on best seller lists or gallery walls. These places are taken by artists who begin to work with whatever inspira tion they happen to have each morning. The woman who plans to be more neighborly and friendly as soon as she has a "better-type" neighbor finds her self friendless all her days. Two men would have followed Jesus, just as soon as they finished their duties and farewells at home, but he put the choice to them as "now or never." And so with us. Either we put the highest and best that we know into our present opportunities and circumstances—now— or we never will.

To turn to the second word of this simple phrase is to focus on one answer to the haunting experience we have been describing. We read not simply that the next day or the next hour came and passed, but that "*it* came to pass." Something happens in each moment of time, and whatever it is comes to pass; it takes effect. Our lives may not be suspended in a state of rarified neutrality. We can't go into deep freeze and emerge again as though nothing has happened in the interval. The rules of the game don't allow us to call a personal time-out and step to the sidelines until we're ready to play again. Whatever we do and say in each moment has its consequences, its influence, on our own future and on others'— whether we intend it or not.

There is no day about which we can say, "Don't count this." Every day does count, one way or another. This is true whether we are counting calo-

es on a diet, trying to live as an example for our ildren, or undertaking to develop a life in closer llowship with God. The ball player waiting for a me run pitch may not politely ask the umpire ignore all the pitched balls until he gets just the ght one. Each pitch does count, and what the bat- r does with each one counts. Nor may we ask God suspend the unrelenting sequence of cause and fect. What we do with each moment brings its rticular results. The behavior we think is inci- ntal and casual today becomes our fixed habit to- orrow.

"He who is not with me is against me." "Choose is day whom you will serve, God or mammon." eutrality is impossible. No more than could Jonah ay we run away from our responsibilities under od. Each action, however trivial it may seem, con- ibutes either for or against the purposes of God d his Kingdom.

While I was teaching in Turkey a student once me to me with a letter from an American pen pal ho described an unpleasant experience of the day. he man whose garden he cared for after school had nfairly accused him of something he had not done d had held back part of his pay. "Is this how mericans act?" the Turkish boy asked me. We do ing our morsels on the water, sometimes without ur ever knowing it, and the ripples they start may ach halfway around the world.

Even our most casual conversation spreads either od will or irritation. When a person leaves your mpany, he is rarely the same person as before. ither he has been lifted up or depressed, inspired r discouraged.

The Significant Outcome

The biographies of successful men and the case istories of criminals are alike in one respect. They ow that the man's career was shaped by a succes- on of small influences, the way he was treated in is neighborhood, perhaps, or on his first job. eople who had no idea that their influence was ounting, who perhaps never noticed the boy, were olding his life.

How many times yesterday did your words and ctions bear their influence, one way or another? lany more times than you think. Each deed or ought with which we fill the Nows of our life does me to pass.

But there is still one more word in this phrase hich suggests an important clue. The Scripture oesn't simply say, "Now it came to pass." Instead e read, "Now it came to pass that . . ." Something appened which was worth recording in the Gospel.

This is what we are after. This is the whole point f our problem: how best to use the opportunities f the Now, how to maximize what we put into the low. The question is whether the record of our ves will deserve a "that," whether something sig- ificant will really have happened in them, or hether they will simply "come to pass."

From one point of view the record of Jesus' life remarkably humdrum. He didn't meet important eople or get in on exciting events of history, the ings that make the front pages today. He simply moved among the common village people, visiting their homes, greeting them in the most casual encounters, striking up conversations wherever he found them. The opportunities with which he started, the Now in which he lived, were no more promising than any one of us faces.

Yet each of these everyday situations was infused with eternal significance. Jesus saw each situation he confronted not simply by itself, but in relation to the larger dimensions of the Kingdom of God.

Surrounding our lives there is the overarching sweep and surge of God's eternal purposes and promises. This is the dimension which the New Testament variously knows as the Kingdom of God, the realm of the Spirit, and Eternal Life. Jesus, living in constant communion with this larger realm, could bring the full power and light of eternity to focus on each experience of the daily world in which he moved. He could elevate each experience into significant relationship with the scope of God's demands and loving fulfillment.

Eternal Dimensions

We see each event of our daily lives by itself. Jesus saw each incident in its relationship with God the Creator and Father. This is the impact of the Incarnation, the penetration of the Eternal into the Now, the elevation of the Now into the Eternal. The people he met appeared not as the irritating, demanding, competing persons which you and I perceive them to be, but as estranged children of the Almighty God, whose spiritual plight he could understand with a penetration born of high perspective. Thus, his piercing, ennobling words to adulteress, young nobleman and all the others. He saw in the everyday events of household and field not mere trivial chores but illustrations of eternal truths; thus the parables. In each encounter with another person, he saw not just a necessary or casual passing of time but a demanding, never-to-be-repeated opportunity for influencing that person's life with respect to its eternal dimensions. Each episode of his life was lived in constant awareness of the potential significance of that episode in the eyes of Almighty God.

Each Now of our lives gains its importance by its relationship to the eternity of God's purposes. We are guided into the best use of the Now by relating it to the will of God. Though the circumstances of any moment seem inadequate to inspire or support our efforts—and we are tempted to wait for the better conditions of the "tomorrow"—we find the necessary inspiration and support in the eternal promises of God.

To live most fully in Eternity is to live most richly in the Now. It is to plunge into immediate experiences of everyday life, aware of their limitations and our own finiteness, but nevertheless carried along to make the most significant use of the present opportunities, because we are borne along by the surging sweep of God's creative purposes. Then the record of our lives may be written, "Now it came to pass that God was brought into each moment of living, and each moment was thereby rendered significant."

Both Absurd and Absurdly Good, Man Finds the Promise of Fruitful Life through Christ Jesus

Spiritual Reclamation

By David G. Buttrick

The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Isaiah 35:1 (A.V.).

WE do not know who wrote these words of our text. Not Isaiah, most scholars agree, but possibly some unknown prophet who, exiled with his people, lived on the sandy edge of Babylon. He was a dreamer. In his mind he envisioned a day when, free, the Jews would go marching back to Zion. What a day that would be! The blind would see and the deaf hear and the lame man leap for joy. Then, even the desert would become a garden where fountains would flow and flowers bow beneath the sun. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Here was an old man in a dry land dreaming of home.

His prophecy was absurd! Who ever heard of raising roses in a desert? And no sane man would suppose that Death Valley could become a botanical garden. Yet the Christian faith boasts a greater miracle. This faith declares that a human life, dry with disinterest and parched without purpose, can be brought to *life;* can blossom and bear fruit by the power of Christ. And for most of us, dwelling in a spiritual desert, that sounds both absurd and absurdly good.

Humdrum Monotony

The desert is a monotonous place. It is a level land. On every side the horizon stretches endlessly the same. There are no high hills, no cradled lakes, no contrasts in color: pine-green with golden earth. In the desert there is one color, the color of sand. And for many folk, life is like that—monotonous. Each day for them is as the day before and every tomorrow is a tedious expectation. They go through the same motions on the same schedule, think the same thoughts, speak the same words with weary disinterest. No hope of achievement lures them on; no eager dreams delight them. Blankly they live: motion without meaning, effort without energy, existence without life. Like the man who began his autobiography, "I was born on April 2, 1884 . . . I have forgotten just why," they have lost the reason for their lives. The malady is common and the penalty is boredom. Eric Fromm suggests that if our diversions were denied us—the papers put away and the television turned off—many of us would suffer nervous collapse. Flung back on our own resources we would find only an inner emptiness. Without purpose life is simply the postponement of dying. Paul Scherer tells of a young junior editor who faced this void in his own soul. He was thirty-five, employed and somewhat amused by his employment. He had a home both neat and normal and a wife equally so. Yet what did it all add up to?

> I'm up against a blank wall . . . Evenings I get drunk, or rub the snout of my gregariousness against the fur of other animals . . . in an almost frantic effort to get relief from myself . . . The great majority of days are so filled with banality that all talk of purpose, meaning and high morality seems a strange sort of cant.*

He was living but you wouldn't call it life.

Life Finds Meaning

Can such a desert blossom? For the first disciples it did. Peter was a fisherman, up with the sun and home in the shadows, day after day. Matthew was a tax-collector, taking money at the same place from the same people at the same penurious rate. No wonder that when Christ came by and with an imperious nod called, "Follow me!" they followed. It is in commitment that life finds meaning. But, alas, a man may give himself away unwisely to "anities and alities and ologies and isms"; all of which become corrupt and end in disillusion. Instead, this Christian faith gives you not something but someone to live for: the God in Christ! And if your life is rooted in God it flowers, yea, as the rose.

I am told that in a desert you will find palm groves and green vegetation growing without a visible water supply. They flourish because their roots go deep and are fed by subterranean springs. They live while all about them the sands are barren. So, in a routine job, with a routine mind, some men are vibrant and truly "alive." Their roots go deep. They are nourished by God and monotony is overcome in faith. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The desert is a lonely place. Folk live in little rag tents; they huddle in temporary cities that disperse with the wind. The very vastness of the land makes human life seem small and solitary. Whether in a barren land or in a busy town, every human being knows loneliness. It is surprising that we in America, surrounded by people and pushed into close-built houses, are lonely. Our fevered social functions—the clubs, the circles, cards and cocktails—are a substitute for a deeper, dearer fellowship longed for in life. They mask a hidden loneliness that each man feels. But listen! Christ can walk in the desert of loneliness to bring a compan-

*Paul Scherer, *For We Have This Treasure* (New York: Harper, 1944). Used by permission.

onship of love. The exultation of the early disciples vas based on the discovery—not mere belief—that Christ was with them and that nothing, not even oneliness, could prevent his presence. When David Livingstone returned from his years in Africa to tand before students at Glasgow, he spoke of the olitude in which he had lived: "Shall I tell you vhat sustained me in the loneliness of my exiled ife? It was the promise, 'Lo, I am with you even nto the end.' " The sustaining strength of every Christian soul is the friendship of Christ.

Lonely for God

But friendship is not enough, simply because our oneliness is *more* than loneliness. We feel as if we are orphans on the earth, and if not orphans at east children long deserted and clearly lost. And are there not moments when you suppose that, if here is a God beyond the bright projection of your nind, he is dead? Life is somehow impersonal.

We are lonely. We are lonely for God. We are nomesick for home. In his magnificent book *Wind, Sand and Stars*, Antoine de St. Exupéry has told of sleeping flat on the desert with his face to the sky. In the dark he awoke to watch the stars wheeling through the night. Everything seemed in motion. He felt himself to be a small thing pressed by gravity against the side of the earth. He was lost in the immeasurable length of space. He spoke and his words echoed into silence. Then, unaccountably, there came to his mind the memory of his boyhood home. He could hear familiar voices and smell the spice of cooking and the starch of freshly laundered linens. Nostalgia gripped him. Our loneliness is more than loneliness; it is homesickness within the heart. On an alien earth we long to feel "at home," wanted and loved.

So Christ brings more than friendship. He imparts to us the assurance of a Father's love. Do you know that a man may feel homesick even when at home, if there is no love? But love can make, even of a desert, a homelike place. In Christ we know that God's gracious love is everywhere and that this earth is a side room in his holy habitation. Wherever we are, we are in God. Wherever we are, we are at home. By the power of Christ, our wilderness becomes a family garden.

The desert is a place of struggle. Did not Christ meet temptation in a wilderness? And according to Jewish superstition, the desert regions were filled with demons dipping down to try the souls of men. Today many of us find ourselves in a wasteland of lost faith, struggling for our souls. Surely every honest man has moved through moments of doubt when, uncertain of God and unsure of himself, he knows not what to believe. Such conflict is not only necessary but creative.

Wasteland Reclaimed

Faith does not appear as if by magic—presto. Nor does faith grow naturally of itself. A man's faith comes by death and resurrection. Old untenable convictions crumble in the encounter with life, and new faith must be born again and again. A few years ago we received as a gift a rather grizzly cactus. It grew and grew and then without warning began to wither. It was on the edge of extinction when an enterprising wife broke its bowl and rebedded it in a larger one. And we have discovered that this process must be repeated if the desert plant is to thrive. So with a man's faith! Our experience of God is expansive and faith must be broken and enlarged to contain it. When passing from faith to faith we often walk in the dry land of doubt, where nothing seems real. And if you, in your life, sense the "dryness" of unbelief, take heart —the desert can blossom and become a highway unto God.

Christ can find you. When a man is lost in a desert, direction is uncertain and there is one recourse—the sky. You keep your eye on sun and star and walk at their summons. So, St. Exupéry, when his airplane crashed on the Egyptian waste, walked to the east by the sky until discovered. Again and again his thirsty dreams deceived him. Eagerly he ran toward each mirage only to end with an armful of dust. Suddenly he saw a distant figure. Would this be false? He had seen figures before, phantoms of the mind that dissolved in air or receded as he ran to them. But this figure turned and came to him and gave him drink and led him out of the desert. So with Christ! When we are lost in doubt and struggling with faith, he comes to us. He shares our earthly life and leads us to God. And God is no fantasy; he is the reality addressed by a dying Christ as "Father!" In Christ, the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Can a desert become a flower garden? Such an absurd prophecy! Yet in the American west it has happened. Waters have been diverted and the desert land reclaimed. The Christian church exists for such a purpose: to channel the love of God through the human wasteland. The desert of doubt, of loneliness, of boredom, shall grow green and blossom as the rose. And you, what of your life? Are you still a spiritual nomad in a dispirited land, or have you become a gardener? Now as you look into your own heart, perhaps you sense that somehow life is dusty and faith dull. Have hope! Christ can walk into your life and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom even as the rose."

Prayer for the Renewal of the Church

O GOD, who at Pentecost didst send the Holy Spirit to enkindle the zeal of Christ's followers waiting in Jerusalem for his promised gift, we beseech Thee to pour the same inspiration on Thy people now and on the Church of Christ throughout the world. Revive the power of the gospel in our hearts, that it may be to us a sacred trust for the blessing of mankind. Amen.

[This is the prayer for May in a booklet of monthly ecumenical prayers available from the World Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y., at 10 cents a copy or $6.00 per hundred.]

The Antioch Story

By E. Jerry Walker

DISTURBING reports had come to Jerusalem about certain irregularities in the church at Antioch. Elders and leaders gathered to consider this crisis. James, the brother of Jesus, led the meeting. Peter, the apostle, was there along with John and many other leaders of the church. It was a serious problem. What they decided would affect the whole future of Christian history.

At this time the church already had spread from Jerusalem. The bitter persecutions of Saul of Tarsus had been responsible. When the brethren no longer could meet with safety in Jerusalem, they scattered throughout Palestine. Wherever they went they talked in synagogues about this most wonderful of all events, the salvation which had come to them through Jesus, the Messiah.

Some of the fleeing Christians had traveled outside Palestine, even as far north as Antioch in Syria. Here, in their enthusiasm, they had preached not only to the Jews but to the uncircumcised Gentiles as well, taking all people into the fellowship. When word of this new development reached Jerusalem, the elders and the apostles were distressed.

It appears from what we know that James, the brother of Jesus, led the discussion. I imagine it went something like this:

"You say they let Gentiles worship with Jews?"

"Yes," the reporter said. "Not only that, but they eat together in the love feast."

"Eat together!"

The elders would exchange glances at that. Meaningful glances. For Jews would not sit down to a table that had around it people of other nationalities or other races outside Jewish law.

"Certainly there is some mistake here. We Jews do not eat with people who are different from us. We must look into this matter!"

So they selected one of their number to journey to Antioch to see if it were true that the followers of Jesus were admitting Gentiles into the fellowship of believers.

The problem of intergroup relations, you see is nothing new. The Jew, even the Jewish Christian, looked down upon the Gentile. He considered the Gentile inferior. And a prejudice was built up.

The man chosen by the elders of Jerusalem to represent them in this matter was well qualified. His name was Barnabas. He had been their trouble shooter on several other occasions, and the elders had confidence in him.

His instructions were to look over the work in Antioch, and if there truly were irregularities, he was to correct them. So, with James' blessing, Barnabas went on his way. Neither the elders nor Barnabas himself had any suspicion of the tremendous events to take place when he reached Antioch.

II

Barnabas must have been deeply impressed as he entered the city. It spread along a fertile valley beside a river. Across the river mountains rose majestically against the clear sky. It was a large city. Over 800,000 people lived there. And it was famed for its freedom. Indeed, the emperor of Rome had declared it a free city, where Greek and Roman, Arab and Jew met on equal terms. Each was free to practice his own religion, carry on his own trade, live his own life.

But the freedom had some unwholesome aspects as well. The Greeks took occasion of the freedom to establish the famed Groves of Daphne. Here in a six-square-mile area of woods, gardens, cypress trees and waterfalls was the sanctuary of Apollo. In the name of religion, people from all over the world came to indulge in abominable sexual practices.

It was hardly the setting for the most important contribution of the early church. But God in his magnificent way had selected Antioch to teach us a fundamental lesson.

Barnabas made contact with the leaders of the church. He gave them greetings from the elders in Jerusalem, and then asked, I imagine quite bluntly, "What is this we hear, that you are taking people into the fellowship who are different from us?"

And these leaders, who were proud of their fellowship, said, "Come and see!"

So Barnabas went to supper with them. He watched as they sang together and shared experiences. It was a testimonial meeting. A love feast. Barnabas felt a surge of emotion as he worshiped with them. It was a feeling of joy. The Holy Spirit was here with these people. He had witnessed the work of the Spirit in Jerusalem and elsewhere. There was no mistaking it. The same Spirit was with these people, Jew and Gentile alike.

Barnabas stayed in Antioch several weeks. One day, while talking with him, one of the elders said, "You know, what we need is someone to help us. Someone who can instruct us in the Way."

Like that! Barnabas knew just the man. "Saul of Tarsus!" he said.

"You mean the one who persecuted the followers of Jesus?" They were dubious.

"Yes, that's the man!"

"But wasn't he a Pharisee? Certainly a man who was a Pharisee would not eat with Gentiles—"

"Let me find him," Barnabas said. "He has been wonderfully saved!"

Barnabas went to Tarsus where he found Saul and brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they worked together, preaching, teaching and evangelizing, and the fellowship grew into a strong congregation.

It was here, the Scriptures tell us, at Antioch, that the disciples were for the first time called "Christians." Who were these first people to be called Christians? We know a few of them by name. Saul, the former prejudiced Pharisee. Barnabas, the teacher. Symeon, the Negro. Lucius, who came from Cyrene in North Africa. Manaen, the politician, a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch. These were the first people to bear the name "Christian." What an international, interracial lot they were! And the church flourished.

Now when you know something wonderful it is pretty hard to keep it to yourself. So, in this city which was famed for its gardens of iniquity, a striking thing happened. The brethren had been worshiping and fasting and thinking about all the people in the Roman Empire who had not yet heard the good news. The Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Everyone knew what that work was: to carry the word to the uttermost parts of the earth. So they prayed, and blessed these men, and sent them off as missionaries. Here at Antioch the missionary movement was born.

So we come to the end of the first half of the Antioch story.

As you probably have guessed by now, this is not a "sermon" in the usual sense. I am merely relating a story which you can read for yourself in your Bible. Nearly a third of the book we call the Acts of the Apostles is devoted to this most important of all subjects: how shall we treat people who are different from us? Not only Acts, but Galatians and the Gospel of Luke are concerned with this same question.

Jesus himself was nearly stoned to death in Nazareth when he told a Jewish audience that God's love and salvation were being sent to all people, not just to one race or nation.

Read it yourself! It's all right there in the Scriptures.

III

There is another facet to the Antioch story. It comes by way of a diversion. Peter, like James and John, had a difficult time with his prejudices. It came to a head when he and some other brethren found themselves in the Roman city of Caesarea on the coast of Palestine. A Roman centurion named Cornelius greeted them by falling on the ground before Peter. It appeared as though this Roman officer actually was worshiping the disciple, and Peter was embarrassed. "Stand up," he said, "I too am a man."

Cornelius led Peter and his friends to a home where a whole roomful of Gentiles had gathered to hear about Jesus. Peter's uneasiness showed plainly as he said, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation." But he overcame his uneasiness as he began to talk about the "good news of peace by Jesus Christ, the Lord of all."

Before Peter was through, the Holy Spirit was upon his hearers. There was no doubt about it. Those who had come with Peter were amazed. Then Peter turned to his associates and declared, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

But social pressures were too much for Peter. In spite of his experience and his own personal conviction, when he got back to Jerusalem he fell under the influence of prejudice. And this big, hulking man who had quailed before the serving maid the night of our Lord's arrest quailed again under social pressure. He would no longer eat with Gentiles.

IV

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey the whole membership of the church of Antioch gathered in a great rally. Paul, a stocky, hard, little fellow by stature, did not look so well as when he had left. There were deep bruises on his arms where they showed through his tunic. But his eyes were bright and his expression enthusiastic as he told of their journeys through Derbe and Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. In each place a church was established—an interracial church with a membership of both Jews and Gentiles.

There had been difficulties. On one occasion their lives had been in danger. And their hearers must have been amused when Saul related how in Galatia their most vicious opposition had come from a few women of social position who had tried to stop their program.

But its success was obvious. The Holy Spirit had been at work through them. And to the church at Antioch the report of Saul and Barnabas offered proof that God himself approved the policy.

Of course news of all this filtered into Jerusalem. People who are not pleased with a program are always able and ready to let a man's superiors know what a dreadful thing he is doing. Had there been telephone lines in those days, they most certainly would have been burning up between Antioch and Jerusalem.

It was a serious matter. The elders in Jerusalem felt something drastic must be done. They had sent trusted Barnabas, but even he had been led astray. With new churches including Gentiles growing up all over the empire, measures had to be taken quickly, or the Jewish supremacy would be lost.

New emissaries were sent from Jerusalem. For their purpose they wisely by-passed Antioch, where Paul was working, and traveled instead through

Galatia. Their practice was to move in quietly and call the leading Jewish Christians together for a secret meeting. Paul was not present for any of these sessions although Barnabas evidently attended at least one or two.

The line of reasoning was a clear appeal to prejudice. It went something like this: "James, the brother of our Lord, as well as Peter, the first disciple, and John, the beloved, are not pleased with this thing. We are Jews, men. We have not chosen God, but God has chosen us. We are a superior people, not by our doing but by God's ordination. This faith was given us. Let us not desecrate it by throwing pearls before swine!"

The Jewish Christians were impressed. After all, Peter and James and John ought to know what they were talking about! Besides, it gave them a pleasant feeling of superiority.

V

Paul sensed that something was wrong. You cannot berate a person or fight him behind his back without his finding out about it. What hurt Paul most was learning that Barnabas, his companion of long standing, had been influenced and was refusing to share the love feast with Gentiles.

But the Apostle Peter bore the brunt of Paul's anger. Peter had the misfortune to arrive in Antioch before Paul had cooled off. It happened in a public meeting.

"Cephas," Paul said, calling him by his familiar name, "you are a man who stands condemned!" Peter, big, husky fisherman—man of stature and muscle—must have blinked in amazement at this stocky little fellow who stood so defiantly before him.

"Cephas," Paul went on, "I know for a fact that you have yourself eaten with Gentiles. What about Cornelius, the centurion? We know the story! And now, because we have been subjected to the prying of certain men sent from James, you have drawn back and separated yourself. You're afraid! You've acted insincerely. And the rest of the Jews, even Barnabas, have been carried away by this insincerity."

Then Paul, right on the spot, preached a sermon. My! What a sermon it was! And he ended with the truth that in Christ there is no diversity, there is no race or nation. In his famous words, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

That's the setting of this oft-quoted Scripture: "Christ who lives in me!" Our differences are washed away when Christ lives in us.

The Jews were set back on their heels. This man Paul had more to him than they had imagined. After all, it was true that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Gentiles. . . .

VI

"Let's take it to Jerusalem," someone said. It was quickly agreed. And to show their confidence, Paul and Barnabas were among the delegation sent.

Now I should like to point out that, serious as the conflict was, it all was handled in good Christian spirit. "When they came to Jerusalem," the Scriptures relate, "they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them."

But there was a group in Jerusalem, who called themselves the Christian Pharisees, who simply were not ready to give up their prejudices. "No," they said, "the Gentiles cannot have any part of this. Not unless they become Jews."

You can imagine that intense personality of Paul beginning to bristle. To him this was all wrong. As he later wrote to the Colossians, "Here there cannot be Greek and Jew . . . barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all."

I imagine he was about to leap to his feet when Peter beat him to the floor. Paul was anxious. What would Peter do now? A moment later Paul relaxed. Peter had seen the light!

"God," Peter was saying, "gave to them the Holy Spirit as he did to us. Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."

Then Peter told of his experience with Cornelius. I imagine he related again how the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the Gentiles. And he concluded, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

A silence fell over the group. Almost under his breath someone said, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life."

Speaking by common consent as their leader, James decreed that the lines of prejudice must be broken. The position of Paul was the right one. Men were chosen to return to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to carry the good news of a church without discrimination or prejudice against one nation or another, or one man and another.

So ends the Antioch story.

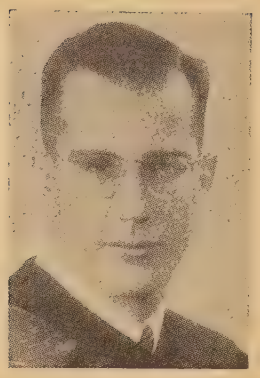
VII

When people say to me, as several have, "I can keep my prejudice and still be a good Christian," it has been my practice to reply, "I fear I do not know what you mean by the word 'Christian,' for it is obvious to anyone who will trouble himself to read his Bible that he cannot be a New Testament Christian and hold in his heart prejudice against another child of God."

What a shame it is that the Antioch story actually does not end with Acts 15, but must be lived over again with new characters in a new setting in every age and nation.

May the only wise God, our Lord, who saw fit to use the pagan city of Antioch that his spirit might spread to the uttermost parts of the earth, see fit to let that same spirit fall upon our church that we may practice here the fundamental truth of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all mankind.

A Sermon for Mother's Day



The Law of Kindness

By Lowell M. Atkinson

In her tongue is the law of kindness. Proverbs 31:26 (A.V.)

I WANT to draw upon the resources given to us in the Bible as we consider today the significance of motherhood, and what it can mean to our homes, our community, the world, to have mothers of whom God can be proud.

Our text is a triumphant synthesis: it brings together law—that is, the moral structure that gives stability to life and makes freedom possible—and loving kindness—the tenderness, affection, concern which make life bearable. This bringing together of kindness and love is the hope of the home, the hope of the world; and it is all incarnated in mother love.

First of all, then, let us think of the word "kindness." Actually the Hebrew word is better translated "loving kindness," because its meaning is stronger than that of our word "kindness." It has a deep and soulful connotation.

We all need someone who cares about us. We need to feel that we are not alone in the world, that we are not an object of unconcern in an impersonal universe. Rather, we need to feel that we live in a world that has become a home, and the symbol of all this is the human home where there is someone who cares for us and looks upon us with the eyes of loving kindness. The mother has become the center of this ideal, because in mother love we find loving kindness as we find it nowhere else.

We know that the New Testament speaks of God as a Father. The Bible also says that God is like a mother. In Isaiah 66:13, God is compared to a mother in the way he loves: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you." In our own time, Eugene O'Neill, the playwright, has seized upon that idea and has had a great deal to say about the mother heart of God and the mother principle in the universe. I rather think that Paul in I Corinthians 13 had his own mother in mind. As one reads in the familiar verses of this love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, one must ask, what is that but mother love—the kind of love which gives a sense of being wanted and cared for in the home, something very basic to us if we are to have any sense of security?

The Somber Side

There is a somber side to this law of loving kindness. You remember the prophecy that the aged Simeon made to the mother of Jesus: "A sword will pierce through your own soul also"—the sword of misunderstanding, the sword of pain when hardship and suffering and tragedy come to Messiah, the sword of alienation as the child matures and grows away from that intimacy that belongs to early childhood. Yet Mary, the good mother, is able to bear all things, endure all things, hope all things, for she believes in her son. In the darkest hour of all, Mary is standing by the cross, unable to do anything except to be there, showing by her presence that she cares beyond that hour of tragedy which seemed to be the end but which turned out to be just a thoroughfare to something brighter and greater. When the faithful are gathered together, believing all things, in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Mary is there also. That is the mother—believing all things.

If we turn to the Old Testament we find the story of Rizpah which Tennyson used for a lovely poem. It is not a pleasant story and I am not going to tell it, but it shows the spirit of motherhood, enduring all things and loving to the end, and beyond the end; hoping to the end and beyond the end or beyond all hope. When nothing is left for her to do but to pay a last tribute of love to the dead bodies of her sons, she does what love can do; exposed to the wind and heat, she stays to drive away the birds of prey from the bodies of her dead sons, until at last the earnestness of mother love so touches the heart of the king that decent burial is provided for them. Mother love that reaches beyond the extremities of hope and still hopes! Mother love that will not give up though disaster has already brought all hope to an end!

The Law as Moral Structure

Then in the second place there is this word "law," which meant a great deal more in the Bible than it means to us. Today the word often suggests an external regulation, but in the Bible it means always the moral structure of things. The law that was given to Moses was thought to be God's expression of the moral structure of life—something by which to live and within the framework of which to find freedom. The law of loving kindness. This sense of moral structure of something that is eternally right and something that is eternally wrong, and the feeling that when you do wrong you never get away with it, and when you do right you never fail to grow spiritually and in the deeper satisfactions of life—that is what is involved in the Hebrew word "law." A great part of the restlessness and insecurity of our young people today is due to the fact that

they live in homes where there isn't enough manifestation of love, but I think a greater part of it is due to the fact that they live in homes—many of them socially good homes—where they have no sense of the moral structure of life; where they can get away with things, as they think; where mother love has become "smother" love and sentimentality has replaced sentiment. Such love has been debased and has become a false coin which lacks true value.

When we turn back to the Bible, we are amazed

A Son's Testimonial

at the note of moral stringency. When someone tells Jesus that his mother is standing outside, asking for him, he says, "Who is my mother? . . . whoever does the will of my Father in heaven . . ." He is even more blunt on another occasion: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." There is no cheap sentimentality about the Bible. Love is lifted up to the level of God's law. It is a great thing, a tremendous thing, and it has dignity, a kind of inherent splendor. What worlds away from the type of sentimentality that is present when a son gives an enormous plush card and a great box of candy to his mother on Mother's Day, and says to her, "This day you don't have to cook dinner," and so on, while the whole structure of his life may contradict everything for which his mother stands!

What Jesus says is so very astringent that at times it is almost embarrassing. "He who loves . . . mother more than me is not worthy of me." Again, a woman cries out in oriental fashion, with great excitement and enthusiasm, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" That is, what a wonderful thing it is for a woman to be your mother. But Jesus does not agree. He says, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it." There is the law, the moral law, coming in: that we are here to give heed first of all to God, to hear his word and do it. This it is to be a follower of Jesus. Other things are on a lesser level; they are secondary.

What was it that disillusioned Hamlet? Was it not the sense that his idealization of his mother's character had been shattered by her conduct, so that while he did not fail to experience tenderness from her, he did not experience the *law* of loving kindness? Lacking was a sense of moral structure, character and ethical dignity and uprightness. Tenderness is no substitute for that. Affection is no substitute for that. And unless loving kindness is built upon respect because of moral structure, unless it is a *law* of loving kindness, it becomes the type of sentimentality which is but a caricature of love.

The Voice of Love

Then there is the reference to the "tongue." In her *tongue* is the law of kindness." We like to think of a mother speaking good words in a home. When a child is hurt he runs to his mother for comfort and the mother knows the right thing to say. The words that show her love and concern help more than medicine or salve. The child wants to know that his mother is there, providing the security, the affection, the concern that he needs. A mother can speak good words in the home; a mother can speak words of reassurance.

A mother can speak words of faith that build up life, for who believes in a child like a mother? And what is so creative as belief—what can so create greatness as the sense that someone really believes in one? Then what is not actual, but only possible, begins to become actual because somebody believes it will. A mother can speak good words that create and build up life in the home with the right use of the tongue.

Of course, there can be wrong use of the tongue. I need not dwell on that. It is tragic for the tongue to be used in such a way that a situation becomes nasty when it might have been pleasant, that harshness and bitterness are present where there might have been friendliness.

You remember in Dickens' novel *Dombey and Son* how the lovely little girl, Florence, tries to win her father's love. Her mother has died and her father has nothing at all of a mother's love. His whole demeanor is frigid, and he makes no expression of affection at any time. Poignantly Dickens shows the little girl as she tries to melt that icy exterior, yet the father speaks no good word of love.

We can all assess our own lives and ask what we are doing with our tongues. Are we creating situations that are pleasant and constructive, that are creative and build up life? Nobody can answer the question for us.

A Mother's Prayers

But what I really want to say about the tongue is this: the tongue can express the law of loving kindness in no better way than in the words we lift to God in prayer. One the greatest illustrations of this is in the true story of St. Augustine. He began as everything but a saint. He was wicked in many ways, lacking in admirable traits of character; but he had a brilliant mind, and his mother yearned over him. She had accepted Christ and she wanted her son to turn his brilliance into creative work for Christ. So she prayed. She used her tongue to lift prayers to God for her son.

In particular, she prayed that her son might be removed from the temptations of the life of North Africa where they were living, and that somehow he might be brought into a Christian community where Christian influence would bring him to Christ. But everything went wrong. He would have nothing to do with the Christian fellowship. He was rebellious and finally, against her wishes and even without her knowledge, he sailed for Italy. There he went to Rome, where his mother felt he had about the least chance possible of escaping temptation, for that city was the cesspool of all iniquity in the pagan world of that time. Monica felt that her prayers had not been answered. Everything had gone wrong.

But she was the kind of woman who hustles while she waits; and instead of doing nothing, she did something. She herself sailed to Italy; she sought out help. She went to the very busy Bishop of Milan, Ambrose, and told him her story. In tears

she begged him to help her son. He tried to say something to calm the hysterical mother, and made a few vague promises. But she persisted until he made a definite commitment to see her son and do something for him. The bishop said of Monica, "It is impossible that the son of these tears should ever perish," so great was his respect for her mother love and for her prayers, for the use of her tongue to express the law of loving kindness.

So it was that the Bishop of Milan got in touch with Augustine. The latter was impressed by the bishop's mind. He cared nothing for religion, but he admired intelligence. Augustine listened to the bishop's sermons and, because he found them intellectually satisfying, he kept on listening. Finally the time came when Jesus Christ himself spoke to Augustine and Augustine gave his life to the Lord.

Augustine tells all this in his *Confessions*. He says of his mother's prayers that she thought God was not answering her pleas, but all the while he was withholding what she wanted in order that he might finally give her the answer she sought. So while Augustine sailed away from her, deceived her, lied to her, everything was made to work out for good in the plan of God, and her son was brought to Christ. He became one of the greatest Christians of all time and was known as the schoolmaster of a thousand years in the Christian realm because of the power of his mind, all of which he put at the service of Jesus Christ.

What was it that brought Augustine into the Kingdom? It was his mother's use of her tongue. It was her prayers. It was her persistent asking of God, not letting go and not giving up and not ceasing to work for the end she desired while she was praying. In her tongue was the law of loving kindness.

Today, in America, if there is any one thing that we have got to do it is to bring together in our homes Christian love and moral strength—the kind of affection which is sanctified by the very spirit of Christ so that our concern goes as deep as the soul and as far as the immortal destiny of the human being, and a moral strength that will be satisfied with nothing less than the building up of the individual's character and ethical power so that his life becomes a tribute to the tender strength of mother love. "In her tongue is the law of [loving] kindness." This is the hope of the home—yes, the hope of our nation.

Pentecost 1956

A Message from the Presidents of the World Council of Churches

AS presidents of the World Council of Churches we greet our brethren in all the member churches at Whitsuntide.

At the first assembly in the history of the church, the twelve apostles, being filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke to men of every nation of the wonderful works of God, telling them of Jesus Christ, and how God raised him from the dead after they had crucified and slain him. And when these men, pricked in their heart, asked the apostles, "What shall we do?" the answer they received was clear:

> "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38, A.V.)

On this anniversary of the first Pentecost, believers and unbelievers alike are everywhere asking, "What shall we do?" The nations are divided into hostile camps. There is no ultimate authority which all will accept, superior to the interests of the individual state. Conferences are held between foreign ministers and heads of states, but the confidence and trust essential to agreement are lacking. And with the growing terror of nuclear weapons, men's madness is such that at times we seem on the brink of the suicide of the world. No wonder that old men should lose hope, and that young men should see no guiding vision for the future.

Now pre-eminently is the hour when the churches, with the help of the Holy Ghost, should speak to the nations. And we ask you, our brethren in the World Council of Churches, to pray for the help of the Holy Ghost, and to use such opportunities as God may give you for counsel or influence in your own countries.

First of all, we believe the churches, acknowledging the need of Christians themselves to repent, should say to the nations, "Repent. Your conflicts must be resolved by reason, not by violence. Violence has now reached such a pitch that when once unloosed it is beyond human control; and unless wars can be made to cease all nations will perish."

Next, we believe the churches should say to the nations that it is neither by words of anger, nor by insistence on rights, that settlements can be achieved, but by the spreading of justice, by combining to meet one another's needs, and by relying for our salvation upon the grace and mercy of God.

Thirdly, and lastly, we believe that the churches should remind the nations, with a passion greater than ever before, that the whole world cries out for peace, that they are all members of one family, and that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of all.

It is in this spirit that we ask our brethren in the member churches to offer their prayers, and to give their witness to the power of the Holy Ghost, and to our own unbreakable fellowship in the Body of Christ. *Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

The Presidents of the World Council of Churches
Signed

JOHN BAILLIE
SANTE UBERTO BARBIERI
GEORGE CICESTER
OTTO DIBELIUS
JUHANON MAR THOMA
MICHAEL
HENRY KNOX SHERRILL

Geneva, 1956.

The World Council of Churches Meets Down Under

Report from Australia

By Winburn T. Thomas

EIGHTEEN months ago after I returned from Evanston, I reported to this congregation my impressions of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Today I wish to share with you insights which came during the February meetings arranged in connection with the Executive Committee of the W.C.C. in Australia.

I would like to pay homage to the hospitality and cordiality of the Australian people. We were entertained at receptions, meals and teas by representatives of all the major departments of government, from the prime minister down. The daily press and radio news services gave the meetings excellent coverage. During our first Sunday in Sydney, there was not a moment during the broadcasting day when W.C.C. voices or coverage was not the program focus of at least one of the broadcasting studios. We made so many tapes for the future that W.C.C. voices will be heard over the air waves for weeks to come. The World Council of Churches came alive for Australia in these meetings. The combined impact of more than a dozen world church leaders, representing Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, Presbyterian-Reformed, Syrian and Orthodox churches, made a greater impression than could be created by a single leader.

Permit me to inject one note of criticism. While walking into a luncheon at which we were being greeted by Foreign Minister Casey, one of the members of the deputation commented, "There was a time when Christians spat in the eye of rulers, and now we stand in line to shake their hands, and eat at their banquet tables." When the church becomes popular and acceptable to the world, then it may have lost its ethical sensitivity, and should beware lest it lose its soul. In justification, we felt free to say what we liked in public meetings, and to the press. Before recording a talk at Canberra and later at Sydney for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, we told studio officials that our speeches contained remarks which were contrary to the nation's foreign policy; on both occasions they replied, "Go ahead. This is a democracy."

The non-Roman churches now have in the World Council an instrument which can project and is prepared to implement a world strategy. The "whole wide world" meaning of the term "ecumenical" is no idle boast when applied to this body. It expresses a reality. No land or nation was foreign to our discussions and planning. We looked at those points on the map where the Christian witness was weak or halfhearted and considered ways and means of undergirding it. Since we were meeting at Asia's back door, the conversations inevitably highlighted the jobs yet to be done in these underdeveloped lands where the Christian community is relatively small.

Obligations of the Churches

Our attention inevitably was drawn to certain aspects of the churches' world program. Leslie Cooke of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees opened the conference in Sydney, and gave one of the two addresses at the "Festival of Faith" on the closing night. No halfhearted gospel his. He proclaimed Christ as Lord of the whole of life, who demanded full allegiance to God and his Kingdom. Out of his experience with the millions of refugees in the Near East, with human need in Korea and Hong Kong, and with Christian mutual-aid in Europe. Dr. Cooke related the gospel imperatives to the needs of suffering men and to the obligations of the churches. Australians even as Americans tend to be self-satisfied, unaware of the meaning of hunger, physical danger and social insecurity. Dr. Cooke's presentations, supported by some of us from the underdeveloped countries, helped to overcome this complacency, and to point to needed steps. The willingness of Australia to accept European refugees, and to provide financial aid while the immigrants adjust themselves to their new lives, is a dramatic and inspiring story. We took account in the seminars of the color-mindedness of the government in interpreting the immigration laws, and were reminded that the churches of Australia, more than any other bodies, are seeking to correct the situation which virtually limits immigrants to those of the Causasian race.

A second staff member, O. Frederick Nolde of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, dramatized the activities of the Christian churches in representing the moral concerns before nations and United Nations. He recounted to me dozens of instances in which members of his commission, by being in the right place when strategic decisions were being taken, were able to protect human rights because they can speak in the name of the non-Roman churches of the world, and defend religious freedom. During our days together, cables from Geneva came asking for definitive action concerning the closure of the Protestant Theological Seminary in Madrid. The manner in which

the Executive Committee went into action, to marshall world public opinion and induce Franco to repudiate the action of his minister of education, indicated the competence and speed with which our world Protestant body can act.

If we were aware of the churches' program of relief and political strategy, we also were reminded of its presence and operations in situations of limited freedom. Dr. Nolde was leaving immediately for Colombia, where Protestants are fighting for their lives and the right of their churches to exist. Bishop Dibelius told of the tension which characterizes the church in Eastern Germany. Josef Hrmodka of Czechoslovakia convinced us that he is seeking valiantly to hold together the churches on both sides of the iron curtain. The impending trip to Russia of two of our number, Eugene Carson Blake, president of the National Council of Churches, and Franklin Clark Fry, together with eight other American churchmen, illustrated the steps taken to guarantee that communication is maintained. Anglican Bishop Lakdasa de Mel of Ceylon kept reminding us that we must undergird each other in prayer that the Spirit of God be given full opportunity to work.

Emphasis on Essentials of the Faith

The messages given in Australia illustrated that the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement are sermon-worthy, not just subjects for lectures. Methodist Bishop Oxnam, Anglican Kathleen Bliss of British Broadcasting Corporation, British Baptist Payne, Metropolitan Mar Thoma of the Indian Syrian Church and Bishop James of the Greek Orthodox Church together on a platform stress not their respective denominational or national emphases but what is essential and central in the Christian faith and message. We Christians have differences, yes, but these become insignificant when we confront a needy, suffering world. The gospel as proclaimed in the churches and town halls, as well as over the Australian air waves, was no watered-down Christianity, but its very essence, focused on man's and society's estrangement from God and his holy will. The very presence of persons who differ doctrinally from us requires us in such a setting to concentrate not only on those things in which we are agreed but also upon the essentials of the Christian faith. Christ prayed for the unity of his followers in order that the world might believe. Bishop James of the Orthodox Church said as we were leaving, "Before these meetings, my people, who number 65,000 of New Australians, were not members of the national ecumenical body. After seeing and experiencing the spirit of God at work, they have decided to throw their resources into the Australian ecumenical movement. I personally am returning to Geneva to press for even greater cooperation." Not as ends in themselves, of course, but that Christ might be more effectively glorified throughout the earth.

The greatest personal gratification was Australia's growing awareness of Asia, and the willingness manifested by the churches to accept larger responsibilities for the spread of the Christian gospel. Australians' main cultural interest in the past has been with England. Their eyes until recently have been no more focused on Asia than are those in the British Isles. Events since the war have turned their attention to the north. Many times during the conference, Australians spoke of their country as a bridge between Western Europe and Asia, with a manifest destiny urging the inclusion of the missions of Asia in her perspective. Australians recognize that they must share with the younger nations and underdeveloped countries to the north their technical knowledge and experiences with education and representative democracy.

Plans for Expansion

The graduate scheme, which already has brought a number of outstanding young Australians to Indonesia, was hailed as an instrument for recruiting technical personnel who might not be available for missionary appointment. James Webb, who heads this project in Australia, organized the seminars in Melbourne as a device for focusing attention upon this area, and of calling Australian attention to the opportunities and responsibilities here. He said to the churchmen, "Give me 200 young Australians, technically competent, and we will begin working on their visas for Indonesia tomorrow." This was a challenge which could not be lightly disregarded.

The churches also desire to share in the extension and strengthening of the gospel in Asia. Minor work in Korea and India has been the extent of their concern until recently; previously their efforts had been primarily among the South Sea islanders. There they have done great work and achieved considerable accomplishments in virtually Christianizing populations, yet the total peoples among whom they have hundreds of missionaries number less than are found in the city of Djakarta. Officials of the Disciples and Anglican bodies both talked with me at length concerning the sending of personnel to Indonesia and West Irian [Western New Guinea]. While these two bodies may experience difficulties in coming into this area on the same basis as have the Methodist and Presbyterians, their concern is commendable and to be encouraged.

Opportunity and Responsibility

My last act before taking the plane for Djakarta was to talk with a well-known churchman—a busy medical practitioner and professor—about coming to Indonesia. His Board of Missions of the Methodist Church has assured me that it will be glad to cover all costs of getting him to Indonesia for two years if a suitable opening can be found. At a Presbyterian service in the Melbourne town hall, four fraternal workers were appointed to Indonesia while an audience of 2,500 looked on. Their witness as to their call and purpose was an inspiration. They will bring to the synods to which they are assigned a firsthand knowledge of Christ's salvation and an enthusiasm and zeal for making it known. The Spirit of God is moving among the Australian churchmen to share their funds and their young people, that the life and work of the churches of Indonesia may be vitalized. *(Continued on page 23)*

A Memorial Sunday Sermon

We Shall Remember

By Herbert Beecher Hudnut

"Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power." Luke 23:42.

ONE of the most poignant distractions of the human spirit is the fear that he will be forgotten after death. He fears that his family will forget him, that his friends will not hold him in memory, that the record of his deeds and days will pass forever and that his end will be like the blowing about of a bit of sand, the soughing of the wind, the restlessness of a wave or the subconscious flickering of a light that passes with the passing moment. Hear the cry of the penitent thief on the cross: "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power." He was echoing the longing in every human breast to be remembered—to be loved even after death, to have his life add up to something better than extinction, to dispel the terror of the dark ahead by closeness to the One who claimed to be the Light of the world.

The ultimate frustration in life seems to be found in the person who knows himself to be forgotten, his memory erased from society, his name a John Doe, his comradeship forsaken. There he goes—listless, dispirited, woebegone and friendless. Why is this the case? The cause may be the unconcern of men or "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" or the evil which he has done and which has returned to plague him in the neglect of his fellows. In his extremity, his only recourse should be this cry: "Jesus, remember me!" And I say to you that this is the ultimate solution for all of our restlessness, for all of our fears, for all of the anguish of anonymity which we experience: "Jesus Christ, remember us!" And when he does remember us—and we know that he will—then we shall remember him.

Of course our waking thoughts should be full of that remembering. Did he not ask us to remember him? Did he not break bread and pass the cup, saying: "Do this in remembrance of me . . . as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup"? We must remember him in a very particular and special way. Remember his shepherding care which he described as defending the flock against peril, going out through great difficulty to find the lost, and then at the end of the day checking the roster, knowing each sheep by name and overlooking none.

We Shall Remember Him

We must remember his gospel message. It ought to have the same effect on us as it had on Andrew, the brother of Peter. Mrs. Alexander, wife of the Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland, in writing the great hymn "Jesus Calls Us" for St. Andrew's Day in 1852, included this stanza:

> As of old, St. Andrew heard it
> By the Galilean lake,
> Turned from home and toil and kindred,
> Leaving all for his dear sake.

His gospel has had that effect on men across the ages, as they hear the good news that a sparrow does not fall without our Heavenly Father's notice, that the hairs of a man's head are counted, that man is of more value than a sheep, and that God cares for all of his children and for each separately.

Let us remember his gospel practice which was usually to work with one person—with one wounded man on a Jericho road, with one little man up a tree, with one wild man in a wilder community, with one blind man crying, "Have mercy!" with one mother weeping over a sick babe, with one woman touching his garment's hem, and to one doubting disciple, saying, "You are not forgotten. Come here and touch my hands." Aye! For the good of our souls, for the health of our minds, for the healing of our spirits, we shall remember him! Let this pledge do much to remove "the dimness of our souls." We shall remember him and his breaking of bread across the centuries, his feeding of the multitudes, his care for everyone who needed him, his adequacy for every human situation. We shall remember the years of the Lord's right hand, the ways in which our lives have been compassed about by good, the promise of everlasting, personal, conscious life with him in glory imperishable.

As God's Word Directs

While Jesus was with the disciples they felt secure. They knew that he would say to all frightening occurrences, "Peace! Be still!" But after he left them they must have memories that would bless and heal and hold them steady. Especially they must remember his trust and his words, and so they were thrown back on their own resources, which were the historical record of their people in the Old Testament and the newly written record of their experiences with their Lord which told them that God will remember his covenant, his servants who serve him, and his promise of forgiveness to repentant sinners.

These writings also reminded men to remember their faults, the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, the commandments, their bondage and release, God's providential care, the poor, and the words and works of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they were

tempted to forget, over and over the words would beat into their brains: "Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?"

The Faithful Dead

These questions of Jesus still hold their relevance for us today. As God's Word directs us, we must remember friendliness rather than enmity, conviction rather than spinelessness, discipline rather than lawlessness, the days and ways of peace. We are to remember that God's intention is peace, not war, and that his divine purpose cannot be thwarted permanently by all of the evil machinations of men. What do we mean by peace? Is it not a breathing space for humanity freed at long last from the threat of global war? Is it not the freedom of home and church and community? Is it not the privilege of Christian service to a needy world across all man-made barriers? Is it not the pushing forward of great Christian ideals and the cleansing of the moral and spiritual climate of our day? And at the end of the day, is it not the Master's benediction, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." We shall remember him and we shall remember God's Word.

We shall remember the faithful dead—members of our families, friends in the church whom we have loved and lost awhile, and the honored men and women who have given their lives for their country, in peace as well as war. We shall remember them in Christ's presence, not mourning for the dead brave but rather for fear and apathy, for faith grown weak, for honor betrayed.

When the penitent thief cried from the cross, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power," it was the lone last claim of a life with its hands quite empty, laying hold on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, as Dr. George Buttrick remarks, "Forgotten of all others—the never-to-be-forgotten of God." Hear the answer of the Lord: "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Please note that it was not some far-off tomorrow, but today! Do you ask what Paradise means? Is it not a Kingdom of memories, a realm where there are no forgotten men, a place where everyone counts, where everyone is known, where everyone is recognized, where everyone is near to the Lord Jesus Christ and needs no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives light?

Glorious Consummation

Forever with the Lord—Amen, so let it be—forever with the Lord: to share in his counsel, to carry on his work for the redemption of the world, to see their names and ours inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life if we all are faithful, to live in Paradise where no one will ever again be nameless or forgotten and where all of God's children—one vast company—will go forward without fear or selfishness or dread to the glorious consummation of that Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Yes, we shall remember.

Report from Australia

(Continued from page 21)

We in this congregation have a unique opportunity and responsibility in the implementation of these plans and in the channelizing of the enthusiasm demonstrated by Australian churchmen during these past weeks.

First, we will undergird each other in prayer that the Holy Spirit, which is so manifesting itself throughout the world, may have full play in our lives, and in our corporate relationships. Bishop de Mel said repeatedly, "We are poor. We need things, of course—things we have been doing without, and can continue to do without. But we cannot dispense with your prayers."

Second, we will make the witness of our own lives count. We will be doers of the word and not hearers only. Several times while in Australia I had occasion to point out that by acting solely on behalf of our self-interest, without regard for the rights and needs of others, our conduct may prevent others from hearing or understanding our affirmations of Christian faith. The same is true of you and me.

Third, we will continue to believe in God and trust his purposes even though the whole world seem to fail. Our religion affirms that the God of history entered time and space in Jesus Christ. He confronted corporate, human evil, and died. But death could not contain him. Nor can it us, if our trust is fixed upon him who, though he was dead, rose again. Such was the message of these of the World Council of Churches who went to Australia. And it is our hope—yours, mine.

Sacred Walls

SOMETIMES sacred walls must be thrown down, not so much to let the world in as to let the church out. When I first saw the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey—the lovely and poignant fragments of a church that was larger than most of the English cathedrals—my first thought was, "Could any reform be worth this price?" A heavy price it was indeed—the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII; it left the British landscape haunted with ruins. But then I thought of the British people today—of their quiet kindliness, their determination to create a nation from which brutality and want are banished as far as humanly possible. I began to see that possibly—in God's eyes—these ruins did not represent wanton sacrilege. I do not presume to read his thoughts, but it may be that Christianity was too much bottled up within walls—bottled up and in danger of stagnating. Perhaps many walls had to come down, so that what they had cherished could penetrate more profoundly into ordinary homes and secular streets.—*Chad Walsh,* Behold the Glory *(New York: Harper, 1956). Used by permission.*

Among Us

The Man in the Gray Suit

An Address before Brattleboro Ministers' Association

By Edward J. Tyler

Federated Church, Putney, Vt.

BRADFORD JONES moved with a feeling of assurance and of freedom through his sermon. The congregation was with him as he began the illustration of the cement ship sunk in Chesapeake Bay, was carried along as he detailed the efforts to raise it, and responded with little signs of pleased assent as he told of the slow power of the tide raising it. He admitted to himself as he passed on that it really proved nothing in connection with his sermon. He passed through a small wasteland of platitudes, and came out at another oasis of anecdote. This was a reliable one he remembered using effectively in seminary: the aged hermit was reputed to know all. The boy went to him with a live bird in his hand, purposing to ask whether the bird was alive or dead. If the hermit said "dead" the boy would release him, if "alive" the boy would crush him with the secret pressure of his thumb. He asked. The hermit said [significant pause], "It depends on you, my son." Then followed another significant pause and because it was the text, Bradford Jones said, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The recessional hymn began: he watched the hazardous uncertainty of the sopranos with bifocals as they reached the top step, then followed the choir out. The familiar words of the benediction almost spoke themselves. There was the awkward pause while the organist looked for a postlude without four flats, and the people began to come by wearing their relaxed and strangely gentle Sunday faces. The usual pleasantries were exchanged. Nothing unusual was said or done.

Unexpected Visitor

He went down to his office to get his coat. He was surprised to see a Man in a gray suit waiting there. He had his back to Jones. He was meditatively running his finger along the small brass cross on the desk. Instantly Bradford Jones remembered his words, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The next thought that occurred to him was, "At his name every knee in heaven and earth shall bow." Yet it seemed the wrong thing to kneel to this Man in the gray suit who still held His back to him, though Bradford Jones knew that the Man was well aware of his entry into the room. Uncertain what he should do, but feeling that his initiative was uncalled for, Bradford Jones did nothing. The Man moved over and stood in front of the lithographed picture of Jesus. It was simpering and pretty and sweet. It was an inheritance from a predecessor, but he had left it there. The Man looked at it an agonizingly long time and the phrase kept blazing in Bradford's mind, "That picture is a lie." As the seconds went by his understanding of the enormity of the lie, and of the tragedy of its consequences, grew.

Then the Man seemed to lower his attention to the glass bookcase in which was entombed another inheritance, *The Expositor's Bible,* undusted, and the *Business Administration of the Church,* and *Great Sermons of 1946,* and *The Art of Ministering to the Sick* and six still unpresented presentation copies of Baillie's *A Diary of Private Prayer and Prayers for Services.* Fortunately Bradford Jones thought of St. Francis of Assisi. Once again he was aware that time was passing and condemned the books and condemned himself.

He grew aware that the windows through which the sun streaked were unwashed, that the room's air was stale and dead, that there was dust along the moldings, that the glass shade on the wall bracket was cracked. He waited for the Man in the gray suit to turn, or to speak, or to disappear; but the Man remained motionless, yet Bradford felt himself now to be under scrutiny. He pulled in his abdomen, a hesitant trifle; almost against his will he was aware of the soft palms of his hands, uncalloused and inept, the toneless muscles of his arm, the sag of his chin; was painfully and for the first time fully aware that his mouth was at once sensual and weak and not a little bitter. He felt the probing enter into the inward part of his body; felt the observation of his thin-blooded lassitude. He knew a real sense of release as he felt the scrutiny release him, as though it had set itself limits and would not enter into judgment on his inner being.

He felt permitted to leave, and so he left, but knew that moving behind him was the Invited One. His wife was waiting on the front steps; her hat was a little too high on her head and she looked a little dowdy and a little puffy. She was listening with a bright, forced smile and small, bored eyes to the senilities of the faithful deaf. She turned the same smile on him and said, "What kept you?" with the faint sting of hostility in it. They went in silence to the car where their two small sons were making dirigibles out of their Sunday school lessons.

The Family Group

"I thought your sermon went very well today," his wife said to atone for her sharpness. "I wish I had never been born," thought Bradford Jones, but said, "Some day, maybe, I will have something to say."

"I think your sermons are just as good as Sockman's and less theatrical," his wife said, and absentmindedly reached out to pat his arm, and as absentmindedly never finished the gesture. He thought, "Thank you, Mother," and noticed with bitter amusement how eagerly he relished even the dutiful praise of his own wife.

Out of habit he stopped at the drugstore while the boys ran in to get the *Tribune,* knowing from experience that unless they had some comics to read they would be insufferable after the strictures of their Sunday school class.

Entering the parsonage he had a sense of its makeshift pretensions, the stylelessness, the secondhand air. The wry thought occurred, "You cannot try to act middle class on a lower class income without being ridiculous." "But middle class is the only way I know how to act," was his instinctive self-defense. "The Son of man had nowhere to lay his head" came as judgment to him.

He knew that the Man in the gray suit was still standing behind him as the family sat down to dinner and was faced with the problem of grace—of how one actually prayed to Him when He was already there. He said, "Make our hearts grateful . . . Amen." This was one of the good moments. Even the youngest looked at him for an instant with serious interest and respect. Then came a long silence; the family fed with growing embarrassment with one another. Bradford Jones could not bring himself to break it with a triviality in His presence and could think of nothing profound or even serious to say which would not add to the embarrass-

Sermon Awards

AWARDS—gold, silver and bronze plaques and 50 distinguished-mention certificates—are being offered by *The Churchman* for freedom-of-conscience sermons delivered before a Protestant congregation before May 1. Participants may include any man or woman, ordained or not, who writes and delivers a sermon or address on individual liberty and then mails it to the sponsoring publication, Suite 708, 118 E. 28th St., New York, N. Y. Manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced, and attached to each should be a sealed envelope containing the author's name and address, site and date of delivery. Submitted copies of sermons will not be returned. The board of judges will make its selections with these points in mind: vision, breadth, intellectual and emotional impact, pertinence to our times, appeal to mankind everywhere, application to democracy and religion, background and documentation.

nent. Finally his wife asked: "Is the Youth Group all set for tonight?"

Pastoral Visits

After dinner he broke his usual routine of relaxing on Sunday afternoon and went out. He went first to the hospital where old George Bascom was still dying as he had been ever since Bradford Jones came to town and for 10 years before that—a man with neither energy nor interests, bottled up and whining, whose gambit was, "Been a long time sence you come to see me." Bradford Jones looked and felt neither resentment nor compassion, but only a great detachment; the words which separated him from involvement were, "Let the dead bury their dead." He said to George Bascom only, "Good-bye."

Now he felt good; he felt released. The idea occurred to him that it would be a good thing to go and see Jennie Meade, the one person in his parish whom he knew to have a spiritual perception of a very high order. He drove over to her house with a rush of gratitude that he would be bringing her the invited One and that she would be very glad and moreover would know what to do. He twisted the iron key that set up the usual clangor in her house. Her spaniel Taffy came and woofed and scratched on the other side of the door; her tortoise-shell cat came and rubbed against his legs; but the house conveyed in its hollowness that she was away for the afternoon.

Youth Group Meeting

He walked until suppertime. This again was a meal of silence but his family was used to his being distracted before the Sunday evening Youth Group meeting.

That meeting was an hour and a half of mounting horror to Bradford Jones. The program consisted of lighted candles, a girl reading from Kahil Gebran's *The Prophet of Love,* and singing of "He walks with me and He talks with me." Then there was bantering and winkum. There were the three girls who whispered and giggled all evening in the corner and the four boys who stepped into the furnace room to smoke. There was callow mooning and there was the blunt repeated jest, and finally it was time to go home.

He stayed alone afterward in the darkened church. He tried to say, "If you know that the important thing is freedom, then you have to wait," but all that his heart and mind and tongue could really say were, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Then there was the awkwardness of going to bed. Did you go to bed with your wife in His presence? The answer which rather jarred him was, "You always have."

As they lay there in the dark his wife said, "You are in a mood."

"O God," he said, half in prayer, half in protest.

The next morning his wife was surprised to see him coming down for breakfast with her and the children. "You were restless all night," she said.

"I know," he said.

"Do you have to go to the ministers' meeting today?" she asked.

"I suppose so," he answered.

"You know you always come back depressed," she said.

"I always come back depressed but I always go in hope."

The Ministers' Meeting

Before going to the meeting, he stopped off in his own church and went into the sanctuary. There he turned and found himself looking once again at the back of the Man in the gray suit whose face was turned toward the Mary E. Taylor memorial window.

Bradford Jones said, and with complete self-commitment, "If there is anything, anything that You have for me to do, or to speak, I will do it or speak it. I mean it. I will do Thy will." The Man in the gray suit remained motionless.

When he arrived in the vestry of the Presbyterian Church where the meeting had been called for 10 o'clock, Montgomery and Clark were there drinking coffee. "Ah, Jones," said Clark, "still preaching the old gospel."

"Hi, Brad," said Montgomery. "How are things?"

"I always go in hope," said Bradford Jones.

(Continued on next page)

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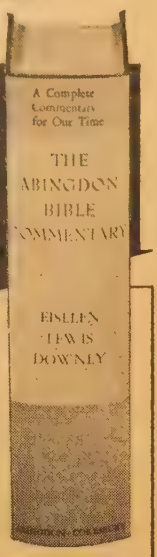

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"Good boy, have some coffee."

At 10:30 the meeting began, and was interrupted twice by the very late arrivals. Adams, who was president, said that because the speaker was already there the business meeting would be after the program. Farnum suggested that they should have some period of devotion at a minister's meeting. Adams said, "All right, if Farnum would lead it." The group sang, "Rise up, O men of God." And Farnum led an interminable prayer. Bradford Jones caught himself playing the game of cliché-counting and stopped himself from counting just as Farnum reached "as far as the East is from the West."

Then Adams introduced the speaker, "Mr. Morris, who has been truant officer for 20 years and will tell us from the riches of his experience about the problem of juvenile delinquency."

Mr. Morris studied the tips of his shoes, pursed his mouth gravely and began, "Well, I haven't really prepared anything to say. I thought perhaps we could just discuss it back and forth . . ." There was a long pause. Adams was about to ask a probing question when Morris continued, "but I have been working now for 20 years with children and I have seen some things." He proceeded to tell about bad boys who had turned out good and good boys who had turned out bad and on the other hand bad boys who had turned out bad and good boys who had turned out good, but mostly he told about boys, good and bad, whom he didn't know how they had turned out. His conclusion was that he couldn't figure it out at all but that he "laid it on the parents."

Because the program had been so long, the business meeting was not as prolix as usual. The secretary wasn't there; the treasurer reported $3.65 balance. The program committee reported that the town representative, with great regret and due to the press of legislative duties, would not be able to speak at their next meeting on "creeping socialism." It was suggested for the meeting that it might be a good time to have another talk by the embalmer.

Then began the discussion of possible speakers for the Lenten series. Bradford Jones watched the smiling, nervous diplomacy in which the group quietly submerged the suggestions of the Come As You Are Holiness minister and the Baha'i reader. There was a lengthy and counterpointed recital of the demerits of radio station, and the meeting broke up.

Bradford Jones waited until all the others jammed into their coats and with ponderous horseplay moved out. Then without turning he addressed the Man in the gray suit who remained behind him. "I don't know why it is that we waste our time this way. When politicians get together, they talk about politics; when two or three doctors happen to meet, they talk about medicine. I don't know why we don't talk about you. I just don't know. We seem to despise our own wisdom, or knowledge, or experience. I don't know why we continue to meet to waste one another's time, unless it is because it is reassuring to find others in the same baffled boat, to share our failure as your ministers and as men. Or maybe it's only a place where we can get angry and actually show our anger, instead of freezing it behind a taut smile. I don't know . . ."

The Man in the gray suit was there, but He remained silent.

Nota Bene

A GREAT deal could be said about the friendly side of temptation. This so-called "enemy" is often the very seed of Christian virtue, encouraging patience, establishing powers of endurance, bringing the satisfaction of moral victory. It is at once the mother of ethical life, the training ground of perfection and the classroom of character. All this, plus the additional opportunities it offers to bring light to wisdom, a spur to discipline, and an inspiration to courage, marks it as one of the most valuable forces in our lives.

Shall we continue to run from temptation like frightened hares before the hounds? Shall we snuggle down deep into our little foxholes of fear and plead for an untested peace of mind? Emphatically no!

Righteousness is the means to happiness. It is the most important element in Christian life. We dare not shun what does most in the molding of our characters, in the creation of our spiritual greatness, and even in the establishment of our happiness. Our responsibility and our opportunity, therefore, are to call first on divine assistance, then to rush out gladly to meet this friendly enemy.—*Robert R. Brown,* Friendly Enemies *(Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1954).**

"SHE [my mother] was a great one for extemporary praying. . . . Better even than my father had been. The sentences flowed more evenly, the language was more genuinely sham-antique. She could discuss our financial situation or reprimand me for my reluctance to eat tapioca pudding, in the very phrases of the Epistle to the Hebrews."—*Aldous Huxley,* The Genius and the Goddess *(New York: Harper, 1955).**

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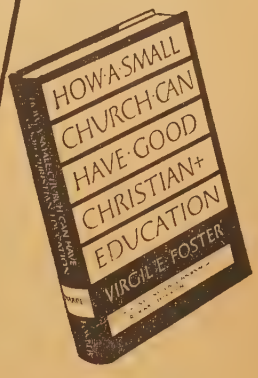

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Pulpit Patter

By Morton S. Enslin

Tow'ring o'er the Wrecks of Time

IN the New Testament there are many words, very familiar and so easily repeated or read, which always seem to stand out in red letters when I meet them: "Lead us not into temptation," "Judas (not Iscariot) said to him," "God is love." Each invariably acts as a brake or derailing switch. As I read them or hear them read, I find my mind refuses to go on docilely with the story. They always seem—again to change this medley of figures—to open doors and paths which are very compelling. At the Easter season—as I am writing these words, the concluding chapter of the deathless story of nineteen hundred years ago is once again before our eyes with peculiar insistence—there is another of those alluring but disquieting words which seems to take on fresh meaning. It is a very simple one which we easily overlook as we reread the familiar story of the dreadful night on the lonely hillside across the valley. The word is, "And he went a little farther."

A word of warning at the outset. I am no believer in allegorical or, as it is sometimes mistakenly styled, "spiritual" exegesis or interpretation. On the contrary, it often seems to me that one of my chief duties in life has been to warn budding preachers, among whom much of my life is spent, to keep a wholesome distance from those treacherous quicksands. As these words stand in the story of the bleak night in Gethsemane, they mean precisely what they say: Jesus left his disciples and went on alone a bit farther into the garden.

Stress on Excess

But as I read them, especially at this season of the year, they always seem so apt, so natural. As the evangelists paint their pictures in colors which have proved so strangely fast, it would almost seem that unconsciously this word had been for them a master text. Certainly one of the most conspicuous qualities of the Jesus of the Gospels is his stress on excess in virtue, an excess in kindness, an excess in understanding and sympathy, an excess in generosity, an excess in service, an excess in virtue.

This is one of the most conspicuous of his bequests to us, and it is one of the most commonly overlooked and neglected. He is reported to have said: "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" Whether these are actually his words or not, they certainly epitomize much of Christian history. From the eve of Calvary, it seems hardly an exaggeration to say, men and women have been so concerned in trying to explain who he was, to fit him into neat plans of salvation, to theologize about him, that they have but rarely had time to see or ponder the things which are after all the most obvious. It has been very easy to intone, "Jesus paid it all," and thereby to free our consciences from the obligation to follow his example and obey his unqualified injunctions.

Symbol of the Cross

During Lent we sing with increased frequence, "In the cross of Christ I glory," and we do well to sing it. More and more common has become the use of the cross in the furnishings and identification of our places of meeting. Baring-Gould's reported sarcastic suggestion that he substitute the line,

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With the cross of Jesus left behind the oor," would not seem warranted today en in the meetinghouses of those eling no especial awe toward either ome or Canterbury. But too often the oss has proved the symbol of dissen- on and separation, as men have quar- led and argued and debated as to the ecise way in which the forgiving love God was manifested.

Too often the debate has actually ob- ured what seems to have been Jesus' ndamental insistence on a life char- terized by the extra step, the second ile: ". . . unless your righteousness ceeds . . ." How deaf our ears have oved to that imperious demand!

I have often toyed with the idea—I n sure it is not original; how few of ır insights are—that we might with ofit view the cross as a plus sign. ould it not be of distinct advantage to e it for the moment freed from all its cumulation of theology and history, od and bad alike, in the simpler, more sic, certainly more fundamental, rm as the familiar arithmetical sym- l? Surely, so to do is in full accord ith the traditional teaching of the one e reverence. It is equally sure that it ould be extraordinarily hard to turn *at* symbol into one of dissension and isunity. In sober fact it might even ortend that victory which we claim at we so desire but which seems ever ore elusive, so hard to achieve, so ow to come. *In hoc signo vinces!* In *is* sign you *will* prevail.

Pulpit Calendar

May 6—Rural Life Sunday.
May 6-13—National Family Week.
May 10—Ascension Day.
May 13—Festival of the Christian Home (Mother's Day).
May 20—Whitsunday (Pentecost).
May 27—Trinity Sunday.
May 30—Memorial Day.
June 3—2nd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 10—Children's Sunday.
June 17—4th Sunday after Pentecost.
June 24—5th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 1—Independence Sunday.
July 4—Independence Day.
July 8—7th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 15—8th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 22—9th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 29—10th Sunday after Pentecost.

(Pulpit Calendar lists dates in the calendar of the Christian year and other observations of national or religious significance.)

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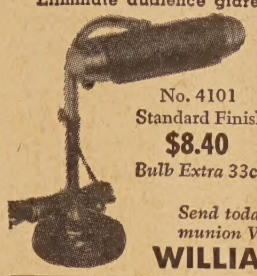

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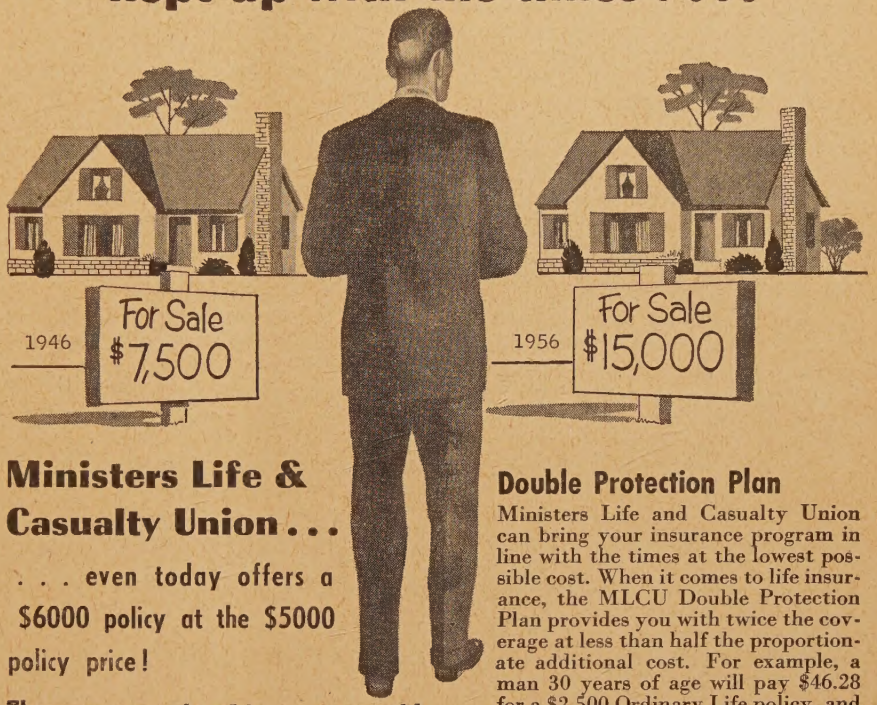

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Pulpit Post

Excuse for Mediocrity

SIR: Your "Credo" (Mar.) is an excellent justification of sermonic mediocrity . . . What about the element of greatness in Pulpit sermon choice?

BENJAMIN F. BURNS.
Austin Blvd. Christian,
Oak Park, Ill.

Wondrous Experience

SIR: Your "Memo" for April is stimulating. The next to last paragraph is a choice, challenging morsel to feed on; the final sentence punch line is more than good writing.

After 24 years in the ministry I find that three recurring experiences make my call increasingly joyous: (1) This strenuous and amazing business of developing a sermon that is agonized in integrity, God clothing the bones. I find that my people still look at me queerly when I say, "The hardest work I do in sermon-making is looking out my study window." (2) The sheer relish in tackling a difficult pastoral problem. Isn't it downright astounding how God leads us to aid another person to unburden himself? Techniques, Rogerian or otherwise, we should study and devise, but the insights, too good to be our own, come so shiningly, so apropos. Yet as we try to capture them afterward, they are evanescent. God seems to grant us the power only while our motives and concern are utterly pure and selfless. (3) Most incredible, of course, is the blessed fact that in the heightened moments of prepared pastoral prayer we say things that are not our own devising and which we cannot capture later, nor coldly predict beforehand. It is this wondrous experience which makes me very sure of the Holy Spirit!

R. D. FREDERICKSON.
Crosby-Ironton Presbyterian,
Crosby, Minn.

Wants Children's Sermons

SIR: Don't forget—at least one children's sermon each month.

Cookeville, Tenn. HALL BARRETT.

God's Master Plan

SIR: In his sermon (Feb.) James H. Robinson has made one of the most powerful and interesting statements that I know of outside of Paul's own writings on the subject. I quote from his sermon (page 7, col. 1): "But on the right is a crowd of curious onlookers. They . . . said they were neutral, but they were not, for if they were not for Jesus then they were against him. . . ." It is especially Dr. Robinson's remark, "They had it in their power to change the course of history," that grips me. I feel that he is suggesting that had this crowd made the choice to defend the innocent and preserve justice, it would have prevented the crucifixion. Dr. Robinson does not develop this point as it does not fit his topic, but I wonder if he realizes what he is saying? Certainly no Christian would deny that Christ by his own design, according to God's will, gave his life as a ransom for many. If he gave it and no man took it from him as Paul affirms, how then could thi crowd have changed history — hov could it have prevented God's maste plan by saving Jesus from the cross On the other hand, common sense an plain fact will have us admit that it wa men who nailed Christ to the tree an brought about his physical death Though God's will directed the whol redemptive process, that will was per formed through men. . . .

I am sure that Dr. Robinson would agree that God's will cannot be over thrown. I further hope that he would say that it was God's will for Jesus t go to the cross. How then can this b united with the seemingly contradictory statement that this complacent crowd could have prevented the cross by choosing the right, the compassionate the godly? To my way of thinking, the crowd could not possibly have acted differently than it did. Not only that but no crowd of complacents of any age, under similar circumstances, could have acted differently. Why? Because they were miserably lost sinners!

But my real point in writing is this: That crowd was no different from all modern people outside the Kingdom of God. . . . Such a thought can only cause the mature one to go to these people with compassion and love for these are human beings meant to be eternal. . . .

EUGENE V. SMITH.
Echo Lake Mission, E.U.B.
Seattle, Wash.

SIR: Dr. Robinson wrote a good sermon (Feb.), but he has fallen into the groove into which many scholars fall, namely, one which holds that if a philosopher of note makes a statement it is true and beyond question. He quotes Bacon as saying, ". . . it is reserved only for God and angels to look on." Jesus, the perfect revelation of God, was never unemployed. Who, then, has a right to make an idle spectator out of God? John 5:17 gives us an authentic idea of God and his relationship to human events and activity. Bacon evidently overlooked this verse, or couldn't believe it; otherwise he would never have thought of God as "looking on."

CARL ALLINGER.
Howell Methodist,
Evansville, Ind.

He Likes Enslin

SIR: Lay on, M. Enslin. Your article "O Come Let Us Worship" (Jan.) is incisive and revealing.

Shell Beach, Calif. G. C. RECTOR.

Misinterpretation?

SIR: On page 15 of the March issue I read, "Peter, the rock upon whom Christ was to build his church . . ." This from a Congregational minister! I thought the editor checked all blunders, including those of interpretation, history and common sense.

ALFRED D'ALIBERTI.
Presbyterian,
Steubenville, Ohio.

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is told that the Baal-Shem once remained standing on the threshold house of prayer and did not want nter. He spoke in aversion, "I can- enter there. The house is full to brim of teaching and prayer." And n his companions were astonished, ause it appeared to them that there ld be no greater praise than this, he lained to them, "During the day people speak here words without devotion, without love and com- sion, words that have no wings. ey remain between the walls, they at on the floor, they grow layer by er like decaying leaves until the de- has packed the house to overflow- and there is no longer room for me here."—*Martin Buber,* The Legend he Baal-Shem *(New York: Harper, 5).**

OU can separate the sodium and the chlorine that constitute salt, when you finish, you no longer e salt. And so, for purposes of dis- sion, you can talk now about a istian's thoughts, then about his ions. But if you try to separate h from behavior in daily life, you longer have Christianity.—*Andrew Blackwood, Jr.,* When God Came wn *(Grand Rapids: Baker Book use, 1955).**

ROM the literary point of view the sex-obsessed periodicals are a cul- al disaster. They crowd the litera- e of intelligence from our news- nds and replace it with moronic n. Their displacement of genuine ture is more serious than their ac- obscenity.—*Paul Blanshard,* The ht to Read: The Battle Against nsorship *(Boston: Beacon Press, 5).**

HE faith of such an age as this must be a faith tried and tested, ical and challenging. It must have it something of the daring of the ok of Job, a daring that hurls its stions to the high heavens. It will deny the possibility of progress—it ies its certainty. It is prepared to e the alternative, to face it without ching. It knows now, at least, that gress is not something that hap- s, it is something that has to be de. It is not a certainty to be taken granted, it is a chance to be won ost. And it knows that the cost may high, *must* be high.—*David Bryn- es,* God's Grace and Man's Condi- *(Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle 1954, $1.50).**

HE committee sat in Rose's room . . . These men were fairer, and t of them a great deal abler, than average: but you heard the same ripples below the words, as when any group of men chose anyone for any job. Put your ear to those meetings and you heard the intricate labryinthine and unassuageable rapacity, even in the best of men, of the love of power. If you have heard it once—say, in electing the chairman of a tiny dramatic society, it does not matter where—you have heard it in colleges, in bishoprics, in ministries, in cabinets: men do not alter because the issues they decide are bigger scale.—*C. P. Snow,* The New Men *(New York: Scribners, 1955).**

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